MIDDDLE VOICE IN FRENCH

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MIDDLE VOICE IN FRENCH

by

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ABSTRACT

It is widely assumed that the subject of any French verb is either the agent or the patient of the process which the verb denotes, and that the choice of voice forms representing this notional situation of the subject is limited to the active and passive forms only. In this study, a third notional situation of the subject is recognized, that of a subject who is both agent and patient of the action. An investigation is made of the pronominal verb forms used to express this middle diathesis.

The work comprises four parts. The first chapter is a general inquiry into the nature of the verb and the forces of incidence which relate the verb to supports outside itself in relationships of direct and indirect transitivity. The second chapter, on voice, investigates whether there is a constant correlation between form and notion in the phenomenon of voice, and demonstrates the need for a distinction between formal and notional categories in any examination of this aspect of French.

A discussion of the underlying structure and values of a theoretical middle voice, in both wide and restricted definitions, preceeds an account of resultative, or mixed-voice verbs. It is shown that these verbs owe their particular value to their inability to be temporally complete before they are materially complete. The aptness of pronominal voice to express middle diathesis is then emphasized by the various

reflexive, reciprocal, middle and passive values which can be assumed by reflexive verbs, by the nature of transitivity within the construction, and by special features of the verb in the bi-transcendant aspect. The last chapter is devoted to an analysis of some middle voice verbs (selected from a corpus including a newspaper, a novel and a collection of diverse texts). The commentary on them points invariably to the general conclusion of this work, which is that the subject of a pronominal voice verb in French incorporates, in variable proportions, the double role of agent and patient.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For his constant help and guidance, I wish to thank Dr. John Hewson, whose suggestions and encouragement have been of very great value in the course of this work. I am also grateful to Mr. Lionel Meney, archivist of the Fonds Gustave Guillaume at Laval University, for his search through Guillaume's unpublished material. The staff of Memorial University library, especially the members of the Inter-Library Loan department, have been very helpful in providing research materials. Finally I wish to acknowledge the debt I owe to Jan Black. Her support and understanding have been the main factors in the progress and completion of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS i

CONTENTS ii

ABBREVIATIONS iii

CHAPTER ONE: TRANSITIVITY 1

CHAPTER TWO: VOICE 28

CHAPTER THREE: MIDDLE VOICE 52

- Theoretical Structure 52
- Resultatives, or mixed voice 63
- Pronominal Voice: Its aptness for middle diathesis 78
- Transitivity of Pronominals . 93
- The 'surcompose' of pronominals 107
- The transformationalist approach 115
- Agreement of pronominals in compound tenses 121

CHAPTER FOUR: VALUES OF MIDDLE VOICE 130

- Reflexive 130
- Reciprocal 133
- Middle 138
  - Movement.....139
  - Departure.....142
  - Change of State....145
  - Attributive function152
  - Verbs indicating mental or emotional activity.....154
  - Impersonals.....157
- Passive 159
  - Possibility.....161
  - Repeated action....162
  - Duration.....163
  - Se voir.....164
  - Frequency of passive pronominals.....168

BIBLIOGRAPHY 170

ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviation UL following a reference to Guillaume indicates the text of one of his unpublished lectures, provided by the Fonds Gustave Guillaume at l'Université Laval.

The abbreviation tr. after a quotation means that the quotation has been translated from the French by me, and included because of its aptness within the body of the text. Where an author's comments are useful for clarifying points or supporting arguments, and are not directly relevant to the text, the quotations are put into footnotes and remain in the original French.

CHAPTER ONE: TRANSITIVITY

Before undertaking a discussion of voice and transitivity, it would be useful to investigate the verb as a linguistic category, and to see how a verb relates to various parts of the sentence around it.

Guillaume sees the creation of the verb as part of a process of linguistic evolution whose first step is the confrontation of the human mind with all that is outside the mind. The primary distinction is that of self and non-self. (Guillaume UL, March 1942: 2. His terms are 'moi' and 'hors-moi'.) Self is the human person, identified by the mind as having its own separate existence. Non-self is the universe and all it contains, all that can be distinguished and abstracted from the universe for the purpose of speaking about it. (Guillaume UL, 5 March 1942: 2). The self, once identified, interpreted and systematized, gives the linguistic category of person; the experience of the non-self becomes the 'sémantèse', the linguistic expression of what can be talked about.[1]

The categories of noun and verb are contingent on the phenomenom of incidence. Incidence is an impulse to seek a support. (Wilmet 1972: 68-69; Moignet 1970: 192-95).

[1] "Le hors-moi, c'est la sémantèse, c'est-à-dire l'expérience que le moi acquiert de l'univers auquel il est affronté." (Moignet 1970: 192).

When the human mind has separated sémantèse and human person, it makes the sémantèse internally incident to itself. The result, a linguistic form said of itself, is a noun. Formed out of the non-self, it is thought of as containing a 'universal person', that which identifies a noun with the non-self and not with the human person. This person is neither first nor second nor a personal third equal to a lui; i.e., a human person spoken about. It is an impersonal, or universal, third person.[2]

When the process of incidence is carried further, the sémantèse is made incident to the category of person.[3] But since self is much smaller than non-self, person can contain the sémantèse only a little at a time, in a way which can only be one of fluidity or motion (Guillaume UL, 5 March 1942: 3). What results is the personal aspect of language, that of the verb. This aspect is also that of tense, since tense interprets the flow of the immense non-self into the small, thinking self in terms of time. The container (person) being smaller than the content, the containing process must be fluid, producing a vision of time. (Guillaume UL, 5 March 1942: 5).

The steps in the creation of nouns and verbs can be illustrated as follows:

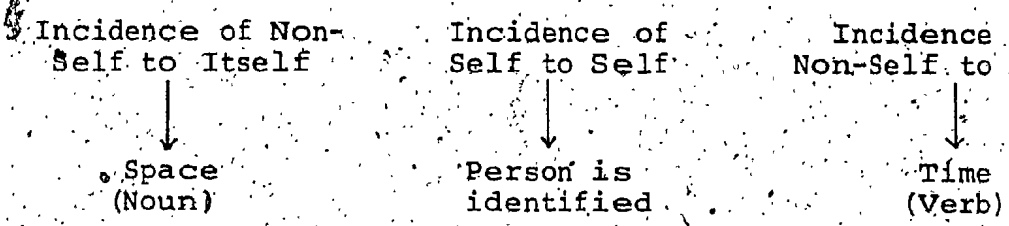
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[2] "Laissé à lui-même, le nom se présente à l'esprit comme appartenant de soi à la troisième personne." (Guillaume UL, 30 May 1947 (C): 1).

[3] Guillaume says that person is the experience which the self has of itself, transferred more or less completely to the non-self. (Guillaume UL, 26 February 1942: 3).

A. Separation of Non-Self and of Self.

B. Then:



(adapted from Guillaume UL, 5 March 1942: 6).

A noun then has internal incidence and refers to its own sémantèse. The sémantèse of a verb is that of an activity taking place in time. The sémantèse can be made further incident to a noun, but in a special way. The path followed is through the category of person.

In opposition to the non-self, or the universal person, Guillaume sees the self, or human person, as human thought confronting the universe. The activity of self is considered to be two-fold, both analytic and synthetic. Human thought analyses when it abstracts notions from the universal to consider them distinctly and separately, and synthesizes when, having distinguished a notion, it relates it back to universal categories.[4] To make the universe thinkable, to come to terms with it, the self processes the non-self as if it were a person.[5]

The steps by which the universal person comes to be ident-

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[4] Guillaume UL, 5 March 1942: 2. Guillaume uses the terms 'discernement' and 'entendement' for my 'analysis' and 'synthesis'.

[5] "In every language the category of person represents the subjective transfer of self to non-self." (Guillaume UL, 5 March 1942: 7 tr).

ified with the human person are the following:[6] the self, or 'moi', having recognized itself, extends the recognition to a being outside the self, yet assimilated to it. This second person is recognized as similar, as a being with whom the self can relate and to whom the self can speak - the 'toi'. Furthering the extension leads to recognition of a third person outside the limits of self. This third person straddles the boundaries of self and non-self, of human person and universal person, and may be recognized as a person like the self (moi, toi), or it may be the projection of the self's personality on to any other non-human being to be spoken of. The third person is the external, absent person, never spoken to. It is at this stage that the human person encounters the universal third person contained in the sémantèse.[7]

The progression of self through the steps of 'moi' and 'toi' to 'lui', human third person or projection of person on a non-human being, makes the self identifiable with the sémantèse, because the universal non-human person contained by the sémantèse is also a third person, capable of receiving projection of personality of human self. With the sémantèse thus incident to the person contained in it, the verb comes into being. And the predication of the sémantèse on the self, in so far as

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[6] The reasoning is adapted from Moignet 1971: 192-195.

[7] Person is the support for the semantic content of a sémantèse. "Tout à fait généralement, la personne est le support que se donne la pensée pour y attacher les apports de signification qu'elle a determinés en elle-même, en langue." (Guillaume 1973(C): 61).

the latter is identified with the universal self, makes possible additional predication to the other values of the self. This possibility accounts for verbal conjugations in first, second and third persons, marked by inflections or by pronouns. (cf. cantO - JE chante; cantaS - TU chantes; cantaT - IL chante.)[8]

Once the sémantèse is made incident to the person, it is through the category of person that it can be made incident to another sémantèse, precisely because the common denominator of two sémantèses is the shared incidence to the third person. In the sentence:

(1) le cheval court, (Moignet 1970: 194)

three operations come into play.

1. In the first place, there are two sémantèses,

"cheval" and "course",

each incident to its own universal person.

2. The second sémantèse becomes incident to the universal person contained in it, and is predicated of that person. The sémantèse is thus processed as a verb, and from "course" we get "il court", in the universal sense of "il y a course", or "there is running" or "there runs". By the same argument, the sémantèse "cheval" could have become verbal, but does not

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[8] Whereas the external incidence of a verb incorporates the category of person at the level of tongue, that of an adjective is incident to person in discourse, as evidenced by adjectival agreement. "L'adjectif n'a d'incidence à la personne que tardivement en discours; et cette incidence se traduit par des faits d'accord.... Le verbe...incorpore la personne ordinale, celle qui change de rang." (Guillaume 1971(b): 145). That is, the support for adjectival incidence is determined only in discourse, unlike that of a noun, which is its own support. (ibid., p.149).

in this case, because the situation to be conveyed involves predicating running of a horse. But conceivably one could say of a person that he or she is doing something which resembles the activities of a horse, like 'horsing around', in which case the sémantèse "cheval" would become verbal. French has chevaucher - 'to go by horse', and even chevaler, which means to support a mine-shaft, etc., using chevalements - 'supporting beams', 'scaffolding', similar to our 'saw-horses'.

3 The person of the second sémantèse is equated with the one contained in the first sémantèse, which forms a coherent group linked to the person of the second sémantèse, whose now redundant 'il' is then deleted. The result is a sentence - "le cheval court" - in which the phenomenon of incidence has brought about the join from verb to noun, and in which the linking or process of interdependence (Moignet 1970: 195 uses "saisie") is from verb to noun.

In a sentence, therefore, with a noun as subject, the real subject is the third person which the noun implies, when this third person has absorbed the universal person of the verb. What is important is that the universal person has been processed in such a way that it can be assimilated to the human person which has developed from the non-self. In other words, the sémantèse produces an IL^1, universal person, which can be transformed into IL^2, human person. (Moignet 1970: 195).

The person to which the sémantèse has attached itself in order to become verbal can be seen as a starting point.

The role of the verb is to present an event moving through time, evolving from a beginning towards an end, or, in Moignet's terms, from a cause to an effect. (Moignet 1973: 363. He speaks of a "causation" and an "effection".) The term 'cause' is to be understood not necessarily as a being performing the action signified by the verb, but as the mental position judged suitable as a starting point for the expression of an event. The cause is the base from which the event can be, not generated, but simply stated. (Moignet 1973: 363). The verbal incidence which moves in the direction of the cause is what Guillaume calls the 'incidence active' (Guillaume 1971(B): 178), an idea refined by Moignet (Moignet 1973: 364) as an identification of the element of activity implied by the verb with its causative element.

But while they seem to agree on the existence and role of the active verbal incidence, there is some disagreement about a second verbal incidence. This incidence is the one which looks toward the termination of the process - the result or the effect. Guillaume does not see this incidence as being part of every verb. In a sentence like:

(2) Pierre observe.

Guillaume would say that only one incidence, an active one, is present, that of observe to Pierre. Moignet, on the other hand, sees in this same sentence an internal incidence, not to a result, but to that which is implied by the verb itself. Pierre's activity as observer implies that something has taken place. This something is an observation. (Moignet 1973: 365).

The verb is thus predicated twice: once to an external causative support, and once internally, to itself.

In contrast, the sentence

(3) Pierre observe Paul

has double external predication, both to the causative support and to the effective support. The activity is still an observation, but effective predication is no longer to the activity itself, but to the result of the activity, which is equated with Paul, something outside the activity entirely. This something is Moignet's (1973: 366) "effection externe", the object of the observation, that which is acted upon. The incidence which seeks its support elsewhere than in the causal support of the activity, or in the activity itself, is the 'passive' or effective incidence. The presence of a support for the passive incidence makes a verb transitive (Guillaume 1971(B): 178). Where such a support is lacking (and lacking in the underlying representation as well as on the surface), then the verb is intransitive.[9] Moignet refines Guillaume's idea, and makes the notion of passive incidence more widely applicable. He believes that a verb which lacks an external support for its passive incidence + an intransitive verb - automatically predicates this incidence internally, of the process indicated by the verb.

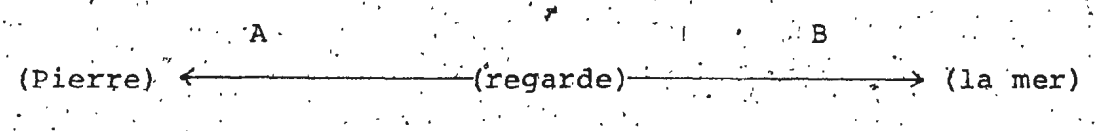
To illustrate how incidence operates at the level of tongue to make a verb transitive, Guillaume schematizes the sentence

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[9] "...l'intransitivité du verbe...suppose...l'absence de l'incidence passive B." (Guillaume 1971(B): 178).

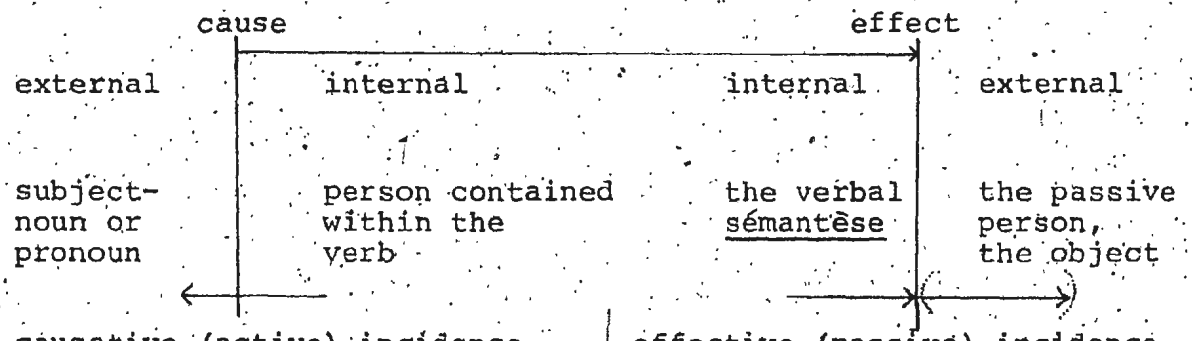
(4) Pierre regarde la mer

in the following way: (Guillaume 1971(B): 185)



The sentence Pierre observe would be represented without the passive incidence B.

Moignet's representation of underlying active and passive incidence accounts for cases of transitivity and intransitivity.

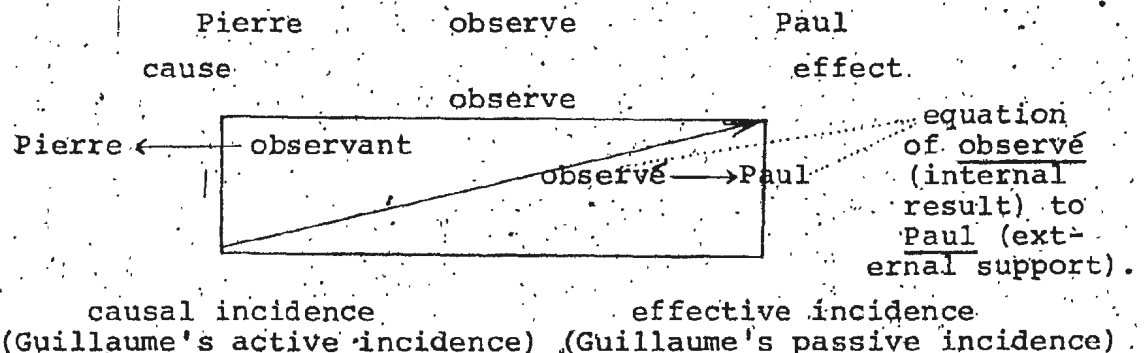


(Figure adapted from Moignet 1973: 366).

The arrow indicating movement of the effective incidence can stop before the internal / external limit, showing that the predication can be internal (intransitivity) or external (transitivity). When the support is external, it is known as an object.

As an example of the mechanics of transitivity, consider the sentences Pierre observe Paul and Pierre marche. In Pierre observe Paul, observe implies a certain portion of 'observant' and a certain portion of 'observé', (Moignet 1973:

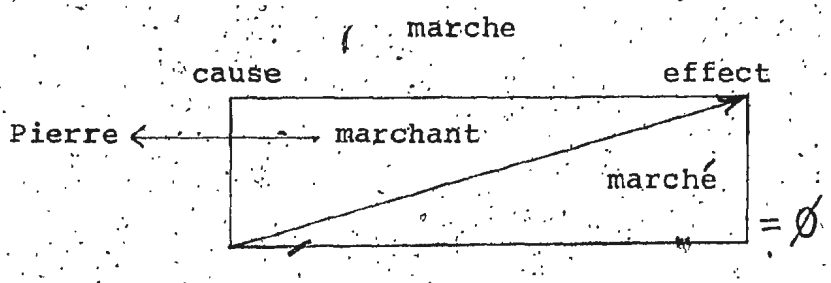
367). Whereas the form in -ant is referred to the causal support (i.e. Pierre = observant), the 'observé' is the result, or effect, of the operation, that which is brought about by the verbal movement of cause to effect.[10] Implied in the verbal sémantèse then is an internal effect, 'observé', which can be equated adjectivally with an external support (Paul), which is not the external causal support (Pierre). In diagram form:



(adapted from Moignet 1973: 370).

But when the result can be equated with neither an external effective support, nor an external causal support, the verb is intransitive, as in

(5) Pierre marche.



[10] Guillaume notes that a verb can be conceived of, or made thinkable, only in so far as there is a movement of the mind from cause to effect. "Pour penser le verbe, on se porte d'une limite à l'autre." (Guillaume, Linguistique Psychique:9).

'Marché' cannot be predicated of an individual who is walking, nor is there anything in a position of passivity of which 'marché' can be said. The result of 'marcher' is nothing other than 'la marche', and only in this sense can the verb be said to have a strictly internal incidence. (Moignet 1973: 368). The resultative side of the verb here is nominal; because of its internal incidence, it says itself of itself.

There are many sentences like

(6) Pierre ressemble à Paul.

the status of whose verbs seems to be between transitivity and intransitivity in that they require the mediation of a preposition between verb and object. The reason for the preposition is that, unlike the case of Pierre observe Paul, in which the 'observé' implied in observe was totally identified with Paul, the 'ressemblé' implied in ressemble is not attributable to Paul. Paul and ressemblé cannot be equated. But on the other hand the sémantèse ressembler also postulates the approximation of one person with another, even though it refuses their total identification. The preposition then intervenes in the role of 'extender' to bring out an implicit part of the sémantèse (here partial resemblance), one of the qualities implied by the sémantèse, and to create a transition to the following nominal sémantèse. (Moignet 1975; 291). The preposition then marks the refusal by the verb to identify with an external support, in other words, to direct its incidence other than internally. Guillaume makes the observation that when the mechanism of incidence is interrupted

or unable to function normally, then the use of a preposition is required.[11] And elsewhere, in a discussion of the process by which a verb is made 'adequate' to its effective limit, Guillaume introduces the idea of a 'dative adequacy' for cases like Pierre répond à Paul. Here, he says, the process of equating the internal passive incidence with an external support (i.e. "l'adéquation") is not possible, so that the effect lies outside the reach of the passive incidence. A bridge is called for to mediate the gap between verbal movement and effect. The bridge is provided by the preposition. (Guillaume, Linguistique Psychique: 9). The same point is made even more explicit when Guillaume says that the preposition is the word in tongue used to intervene in discourse between two words which are separated by a gap not bridged by incidence.[12]

The preposition, then, is for Guillaume a marker of the intransitivity of the verb. Its intervention is called for when the mechanism of incidence is not able to attach itself

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[11] "La préposition est, dans la transition langue/discours, la partie du discours survenant quand le mécanisme d'incidence cesse d'être opérant." (Guillaume 1973(C): 184).

[12] "Elle (la préposition) est le mot qui intervient là où, entre deux termes de phrase, le mécanisme apparaît suspendu." (Guillaume 1971(B): 154-155). In discussing Pierre parle à Paul, Guillaume says, "...le verbe parler intransitif étant suspensif, une fois produit, à l'égard du mécanisme d'incidence, on rencontre une suspension du mécanisme d'incidence, une sorte d'hiatus...que le rôle de la préposition est de combler. Dans l'hypothèse théorique où les mots pourraient se succéder en phrase, sans qu'il y ait suspension du mécanisme d'incidence, la préposition serait inexistante." (Guillaume 1971(B): 163).

to an effective support. Transitivity however, is the quality of a verb in which incidence can function unhampered, to both active and passive supports (i.e. without the mediation of a preposition).[13]

There are other views held by grammarians on what constitutes the limits of transitivity and intransitivity of verbs. Blinkenberg, in his study of the problem of transitivity,[14] presents an account of the preposition which differs from Guillaume's. Guillaume's theory of incidence, as such, is not a factor in Blinkenberg's explanation of transitivity, but a similar idea forms part of his definition of transitivity in general. He sees transitivity as an interdependence and interdetermination between two parts of a sentence. (Blinkenberg, 1960: 9)[15]. The content of one of these parts is not self-sufficient and needs to be completed by some sort of

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[13] "Cette double incidence est...ce qui fait le verbe transitif. Là où le verbe n'est en soi porteur que de la seule incidence active, il est intransitif." (Guillaume 1971(B): 171).

[14] Blinkenberg, Andreas, Le Problème de la transitivité en français moderne. Copenhagen, 1960.

[15] Transitivity in Modern French, Blinkenberg believes, lies somewhere between two possible extremes of the process by which words or expressions that are originally independent become fused or dependent on each other. cf. Politzer, in a review of the book: "At the one extreme of the evolutionary process is complete syntactical independence, at the other is complete merger into an 'expression figée', or into one word (e.g. Latin: animadvertere). Transitivity occupies a place somewhere between these extremes." (Politzer 1961: 287).

complement. (Blinkenberg 1960: 12). This complement, a thing in the widest possible sense of the word, is in a relationship of direction, application, incidence, result, etc. with the idea expressed by the verb. The idea is thus oriented towards a finishing point (cf. Moignet's 'effection'), in a way similar to that in which the idea is actualized by the existence of a subject which indicates its starting point (cf. Moignet's 'causation'). (Blinkenberg 1960: 17). So far Blinkenberg's ideas coincide fairly closely with the ideas already presented. The divergence of views occurs when Blinkenberg says that the complement entering into the field of transitivity can be linked directly to the transitive word (the verb), or else the transition can take place by means of a preposition whose meaning has been more or less diluted. In both cases, he says, the same forces are at work in forming groups of interdependent terms. Thus tenir le volant - tenir à la vie - tenir de son père represent different stages in the same process, each stage having stylistic and semantic nuances irrelevant in the overriding force of transitivity.[16] The reason that all three expressions are transitive is that according to Blinkenberg the prepositions 'à' and 'de', and elsewhere possibly other prepositions, tend to take on a semantic value of zero, and become simply empty linking words used in transitive constructions. (Blinkenberg 1960: 20).

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16 "Que l'objet soit relié directement au mot transitif ou que la transition se fasse au moyen d'une préposition à sens plus ou moins réduit, dans les deux cas nous avons les mêmes forces en jeu, les mêmes groupements de termes interdépendants." (Blinkenberg 1960: 20).

Guillaume's limits imposed on the domain of transitivity are then narrower in logic than those suggested by Blinkenberg. Guillaume's limit is the moment when incidence stops operating from verb to effect as a linking force, and when a preposition is introduced to forge the link. For Blinkenberg, however, both the traditional direct object and indirect object are said to be within the scope of transitive relationships.[17]

But, having admitted direct and indirect objects into the realm of transitivty, where does one stop? For there are many other elements entering into sentence construction which have no formal mark showing their relation to the verb. On what formal basis is one to distinguish

(7) Il travaille le soir

from

(8) Il travaille le bois ?

The problem then is one of deciding to what extent, if at all, these other elements are considered to fall within the scope of the transitivity function. Halliday points out that if transitivity is thought of as a part of the organizing principle of sentence structure, then the limits of transitivity are virtually too wide to be fixed:

> "Once transitivity is treated as a system of the clause, or rather as a set of such systems, it can be seen to be part of a wide domain extending over the whole of the experiential component of clause organization and embracing the full set of structural functions: not only actor and goal, or their equivalents, but also beneficiary, range, attribute,

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17. "Nous parlons donc d'un objet indirect lorsque le terme qui complète le sens du verbe se lie à celui-ci par le moyen d'une préposition de valeur très générale, dont le sens propre peut en effet se rapprocher de zéro." (Blinkenberg 1960: 84).

> instrument, manner, time, place, or whatever are found to be the appropriate and most useful generalizations. The question whether the term "Transitivity" is then used to cover the whole of this domain, or is limited to the area of processes and participants, ...is a terminological one: the line between participants and circumstances is not a sharp one, and is almost certainly specific to the given language." (Halliday 1967 III: 180-181).[18]

If transitivity is then to have a restricted sense, limited to those beings participating in a given process as direct or indirect objects, there must be an attempt to establish some criteria distinguishing participants from circumstances. Blinkenberg tries to lay down the conditions for the transitive function in two related ways, though even together they do not respond fully to the need of absolute criteria. And in doing so, he lays himself open to the charge that he is using semantic information as a criterion for membership in a supposedly grammatical category. Grammatical definitions should not be made in terms of meaning, and if a workable account of transitivity cannot

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[18] beneficiary = a participant rôle, the traditional 'indirect object'. John in He gave John some coffee.

range = a circumstantial element in the process, such as the wall in He jumped the wall.

attribute = the attribute of a participant. cf. happy in She is happy (Halliday 1967 I: 53).

Corresponding to these categories and others which can be devised for English are the traditional French compléments d'objet indirect (or second), compléments de mesure, de poids ou de prix, and the whole gamut of compléments circonstantiels (de temps, de lieu, de cause, de but, de manière, de moyen - and even, among grammarians bent on classifying - de destination, d'origine, de propos, d'accompagnement, de concession, etc. etc.). (cf. Grammaire Larousse 1964: 184-186).

be made without such reference to the linguist's intuition alone, then the definition is not strictly grammatical.

Blinkenberg requires in the first place:

a) a cohesive interdependence between the terms of the transitively-linked group in question.

b) an incompleteness in the meaning of the verb or verbal group which calls for completion.[19]

c) in cases where the linking of terms requires a preposition, the generalization and abstraction of the meaning of the preposition to the point where it is simply a linking term with no independant meaning of its own. (Blinkenberg 1960: 87).

Words or word-groups meeting these criteria can then be made to undergo a test which in many cases will distinguish objects from complements. The test consists of rearranging the word order of a given sentence. In a sentence whose verb has dubious transitive or intransitive status, a term suspected of being an object will reveal itself as such if it allows itself to be placed at the beginning of the sentence while at the same time permitting anaphoric pronominal reference to it near the verb by a direct or indirect pronoun object or by a pronominal adverb without a precise locative sense (i.e. y or en). This procedure, which Blinkenberg calls a "construction disloquée à thème antéposé"

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[19] "En parlant du sens même du terme "transitif", nous y trouvons cette idée que le contenu d'un membre de phrase donné ne suffit pas à lui-même, mais se rapporte à un autre membre; une incomplétude du premier appelle un complément." (Blinkenberg 1960: 12).

(Blinkenberg 1960: 68), allows for a clear-cut distinction of complement and object in sentences like the following:

(9) Il a dansé la première fois avec Jeanne.
⟶ La première fois il a dansé avec Jeanne.

Here, "la première fois" is a complément: there is no pronominal reference,

(10) Il a dansé la première danse avec Jeanne.
⟶ La première danse, il l'a dansée avec Jeanne.

Here, "la première danse" is an object; the construction permits pronominal reference.

This tool of analysis is not perfect, however. The edges of the domain of transitivity remain blurred whenever a mechanical criterion is applied. There is no real way of distinguishing an indirect object from a complement, because a sentence like:

(11) Il donne tout à son petit frère.

can be transposed equally well as:

⟶ A son petit frère il donne tout.

or as:

⟶ Son petit frère, il lui donne tout.

Blinkenberg, noting the traditional hesitation about the status of indirect objects,[20] sees in the double possibility offered by his thematic transposition a confirmation of its usefulness.[21]

In addition, this procedure assigns rather wide limits to the direct object. The transposition applied to:

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[20] cf. the 'complément d'attribution' or 'complément d'objet second' (Grammaire Larousse 1969: 180-181).

[21] "Cet équilibre entre les deux solutions cadre parfaitement avec la délimitation indécise de l'objet indirect: il confirme donc pour nous la valeur de ce critère." (Blinkenberg, 1960: 70).

(12) Il a sauté les 1^m50 prescrits pour l'épreuve.

gives:

Les 1^m50 prescrits..., il les a sautés,

presenting what may better be considered a complement as a direct object. Blinkenberg is himself aware of the shortcomings of his criterion, admitting that "this criterion... emphasizes the impossibility in principle of ever finding a mechanical analysis allowing clear and certain decisions to be made in all cases." (Blinkenberg 1960: 68 tr). While a group of words bound by a relationship of transitivity may form a cohesive group within a sentence, with the object most often postposed and only adverbs generally allowed to break up a grouping (Blinkenberg 1960: 95), there are enough exceptions in 'normal' word order to nullify any decisions based on this criterion. Final recourse in distinguishing objects from complements must be an awareness of the objects' "greater semantic and rhythmical cohesion with the verb: verb and object determine each other reciprocally." (Reid 1962: 165).

A further problem with Blinkenberg's theory of transitivity is the assumption that, for the purposes of linking verb and noun, there is no semantic difference between 'à' and 'de'. This claim, like all claims that certain words are 'meaningless' is disputable.

A much more reasonable view is the one suggested by Moignet (1975). Refusing to accept that the prepositions

involved in indirect transitivity are meaningless,[22] he points out that the preposition is the solution to the problem of completing fundamentally intransitive words (including of course verbs whose resultative incidence is internal, and which are therefore nominal). A verb like ressembler is intransitive in tongue because it cannot itself externalise its effective incidence. But, followed by the preposition 'à', which extends one of the qualities of the sémantème, it forms part of a transitive group in discourse.

Examination of a large number of verbs to determine if there are grounds for characterizing verbs lexically as invariably transitive or intransitive reveals that almost any generalization will admit exceptions. There are, of course, verbs at both extremities on a scale of transitivity. At one end are verbs expressing a process incident only to a subject, such as exister, dormir, or marcher, which seem to be absolute intransitives. For these verbs an external effective incidence does not exist. Existé, dormi, and marché can be said of nothing but the process itself.[23]

At the other end are verbs expressing a process which

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[22] "...il faut admettre que la préposition ne saurait être, en aucun cas, un signe inutile et superflu, et que sa présence, même là où elle ne paraît pas indispensable, ne saurait être non signifiante." (Moignet 1975: 282).

[23] Le Bidois, discussing the characteristics of inherently intransitive verbs, says of them that "(ils) énoncent d'une manière complète et parfaite la nature propre de l'action: de plus, ils la dénoncent comme rigoureusement adhérante au sujet, comme enfermée en lui, et ne "passant" pas hors de lui". (Le Bidois 1968 I: 389).

directs action outside of itself, such as fabriquer, découvrir and prendre, which, alone, are incomplete and which present therefore the essential condition for transitivity, the need for completion by an object.' (Blinkenberg 1960: 22). These verbs are characterized by the presence of an effective incidence, and by the presence of a support for that incidence, an external object which is related to the result of the process.

But the majority of verbs are ambivalent with respect to transitivity. The process they express can be incident to an external effect or they can be internally incident, depending not on the inherent sense of the verb but on the situation which must be expressed. A verb like boire, chanter, or écrire, will be transitive if a speaker wishes to direct the action outside of the confines of the action itself, and it will be intransitive if the speaker's attention is on the process itself. These verbs are then functionally neutral, and their transitivity is not a lexical question, but a contextual one. (Blinkenberg 1960: 23).

cf. (13) elle chante - elle chante une petite mélodie.

And yet, even with the greatest number of verbs characterized as transitively neutral, the limits of those verbs most generally used absolutely at the extremes of the scale are not definitively fixed. Many verbs can be considered transitive though constructed without an object, while many verbs can be considered intransitive even though constructed with what appears to be an object.

In the following sentences, the verb 'fumer' has two different transitive functions:

(14) La cheminée fume.

(15) L'homme fume.

In (14), the verb is patently intransitive, whereas in (15), it is transitive, constructed without an object. In order to establish the 'implicit transitivity'[24] in cases like this, one can use the notion of 'predictable object'.[25] Here, the unexpressed but underlying object would be a word like 'un cigare', 'une pipe', etc. In

(16) Bébé boit comme une grande personne,

the predictable object would be 'du lait', or any other drink appropriate for a baby. But in:

(17) Il a été renvoyé parce qu'il buvait,

the verb is intransitive, since a semantic extension here confers on the verb boire the sense of s'enivrer (get drunk) (Gougenheim, 1969: 254). Lyons too believes that some verbs are naturally transitive, despite their lack of an explicit object. "It seems reasonable to say that eat is inherently transitive, but that its object may be deleted (in the pseudo-intransitive, 'absolute' construction)." (Lyons 1969: 361). In Guillaumean terms, an implicitly transitive verb is one

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[24] Blinkenberg notes with respect to "il regarde" and "on porte en ville" (= we deliver), "Dans les deux cas, on peut aussi employer le terme de transitivité implicite, le contenu des deux verbes cités impliquant une action extrovertie, de nature spécifiquement transitive, sans qu'on doive nécessairement expliciter l'objet sur lequel porte l'action." (Blinkenberg 1960: 46).

[25] Gougenheim 1969: 259 (review of thesis by Mira Rothemberg: Les Verbes à la fois transitifs et intransitifs en français). Her term is "objet prévisible".

whose incidence to the effect is present but not externalized, remaining within the confines of the particular verbal sémantèse. Whereas this incidence cannot normally be externalized in an intransitive verb like marcher, because no external effective support is conceivable, the incidence does exist in potentially transitive verbs, because an external effective support is conceivable. (Moignet 1973: 374).

Thus, in

(18) les aveugles verront, les sourds entendront,

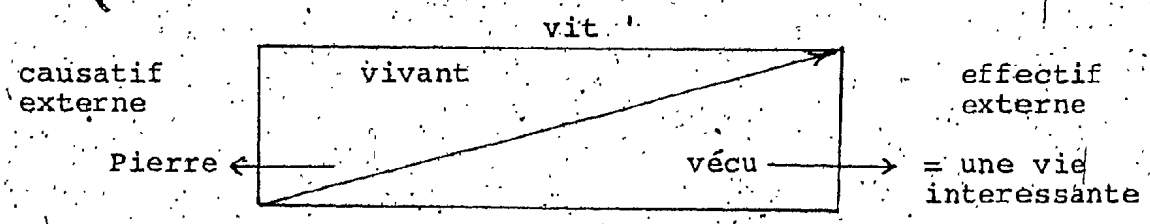
the effective incidence is actually to everything that can be thought of as visible and as audible; that is, to the sémantèse of the verbs themselves in their widest possible sense, and not to any particular object. In

(19) les paralytiques marcheront,

however, the verb is fully intransitive, and the passive or effective incidence is non-existent. (Moignet 1973: 374). Certain fully intransitive verbs, on the other hand, appear to be constructed with a direct object. This object is in fact a restatement in noun form of the sémantèse. In

(20) Pierre vit une vie intéressante,

which can be schematized as follows:



the object reiterates the result of the verb. The result of the operation 'vivre' is 'vécu', and this 'vécu' constitutes

a 'vie'. (Moignet 1973: 372). In this sentence then, "une vie" is the same thing as the result of the verb; the purpose of restating the semantic content of the verb is to provide a support for the restrictive qualification "intéressante". This type of object is often referred to as internal, and is not the passive support of an effective incidence, conceptually impossible in an absolutely intransitive verb, but rather a means of qualifying the sense of the verb in much the same way as a complement. The implicit sense of the verb is externalized and made explicit in noun form. Le Bidois notes of these constructions that the 'object' serves only to reinforce or qualify the action denoted by the verb, or has an analogous sense, and that the noun is accompanied by an epithet or a determiner, generally a possessive. (Le Bidois 1968 I: 389-390). In the sentence:

(21) Cela sent le réfectoire.,

the noun réfectoire does not correspond with anything external to the action expressed by the verb. Its role is to modify the nature of the action. (Grammaire Larousse 1964: 179). Frei provides some examples of this type of construction which "appears grammatically as a complement disguised as an object and as an intransitive disguised as a transitive" (Frei 1971: 255 tr.). cf. Trembler la fièvre, dormir un cours, bâiller sa journée, blasé et puant l'ivresse." Echoing Moignet's notion of restatement of the verb in noun form, he says that what looks to be a transitive relation between verb and noun is actually a relation of inherence (Frei 1971:

255). That is, the noun re-expresses an idea already inherent in the verb. The nature of the relation in these expressions is in fact very similar to the copula relation.

As an example of how it is impossible to characterize verbs as belonging by nature to a class which is strictly transitive or strictly intransitive, it may be pointed out that certain verbs normally treated transitively can lose their transitive function and become the virtual equivalent of copula verbs. The dilution of their semantic content causes their direct objects to assume the status of attributes, and when the loss is complete, an adjective may stand in the third position of a transitive relation normally occupied by a noun-object.[26] Verbs like représenter, marquer, and especially faire[27] often enter into copula-like constructions in which what appears to be an object is in fact an attribute.

Another illustration of the futility of assigning fixed and predetermined transitivity values to verbs is provided by an examination of the so-called factitive function. When the normal sense of a verb or sémantèse is extended by the

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[26] "...certains transitifs peuvent voir s'atténuer et se généraliser leur contenu au point de devenir également de simples termes de liaison qui font glisser la fonction première d'objet vers celle d'attribut du sujet, la construction ayant basculé définitivement lorsqu'elle admet comme troisième terme un adjectif qui est l'attribut le plus nettement caractérisé." (Blinkenberg 1960: 25).

[27] Examples:
a) Ce développement représente une nouvelle étape dans l'évolution des rapports franco-britanniques.
b) L'événement marque une date importante dans notre histoire.
c) "Quel triste compagnon il faisait" (Frei 1971: 254).
d) Le chapeau de paille, ça fait pauvre et ordinaire. (Frei 1971: 254).

addition of a causative notion,[28] the status of the intransitive is affected. Monter, for example, intransitive when relating only to its subject, can become transitive when the former subject becomes object, with the cause of the upward motion being expressed as subject. cf. le sac monte - je monte le sac au grenier.

The solution then to the problem of classification of verbs as basically transitive or intransitive is perhaps to abandon the attempt altogether, and to concur with LeBidois' contention that the simplest thing to do is to consider as constantly, absolutely and irreducibly intransitive only verbs of state (presumably he means être and its synonyms (in context)), since virtually all verbs of action, at one point or another in their history, can or could take an object. (Le Bidois 1968 I: 390-391). Virtually all verbs, in other words, are potentially or implicitly transitive.

If such apparently intransitive verbs as aboyer, bouillir, galoper, tomber are used transitively in expressions like aboyer des ordres, galoper un cheval, tomber un adversaire (Blinkenberg 1960: 104-106), bouillir le lait (Dictionnaire Robert), and if mourir at the time of Villehardouin and Joinville could be used in the transitive sense of mettre à mort (Le Bidois 1968 I: 391), then the search for absolutes is bound to be frustrated. Sauvageot, however, sees nothing but good in this state of affairs. "The ability to make any

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[28] Not Moignet's "causation", which is the starting point for the expression of a verbal notion.

intransitive verb transitive, and to use any verb, even a transitive one, without an object, will lighten the speaker's task and make concise expression easier, thereby increasing the amount of information in a given quantity of speech." (Sauvageot 1962: 129 tr.).

Consequently in this study it will be accepted that a verb is that element of language expressing a sémantèse in time unfolding from a beginning to an end. It is characterized by the presence of two incidences, one which seeks a causative support which is the grammatical subject, and the other which is the effective incidence, and which may or may not seek an external support.

CHAPTER TWO: VOICE

In an ideal transitive system, there are restrictions on the notional status of the starting point and the finishing point of the sémantèse. In this ideal system, which French does not have, the incidence to the cause would go only to an animate being, capable of activity, while the incidence to the effect could go only to a being thought of as inanimate and incapable of activity. (Guillaume 1973(C): 119).[1] Such a system, Guillaume feels, corresponds with an instinctual, underlying view of the dynamism of any situation.[2] Ideally then, causal incidence seeks its support in a dynamic subject, an animate being capable of instigating the action of the semantese, and effective incidence seeks its support in a dynamic object, an inanimate being capable only of being the recipient of activity.

On the grammatical level, however, the support for causal incidence is simply the 'logical subject', that which is being

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[1] "Transitivity is bound up, then, with the distinction of animate and inanimate nominals; and in the 'ideal' system the former may be either 'agentive' or 'non-agentive' (in both transitive and intransitive sentences), the latter only 'non-agentive'." (Lyons 1969: 359).

[2] "L'activité et la passivité de représentation sont des états intrinsèques qui, si la langue n'outrepassait pas la donnée, réserverait l'emploi de la voix active aux êtres animés et celui de la voix passive aux êtres inanimés." (Guillaume 1971(B): 175).

spoken about. The logical subject of a sémantèse can conceivably be adynamic - e.g., it tripped me, it stands in the corner - that is, not endowed with potential for action, just as a 'logical' object, the support for effective incidence can be adynamic, that is, animate and capable of acting.[3] Nothing prevents the mind from conceiving of a situation which is not 'ideal' and from creating linguistic forms representing that situation.[4] But if the underlying dynamics of the sémantèse are in fact real, then perhaps some evidence can be found in language to support the view that it is more natural to conceive of animate beings doing things, and of inanimate beings having things done to them.[5]

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[3] The distinction in subjects is made explicit in Guillaume (UL, 9 April 1948: 1):

" - le sujet dynamique qui est celui que la pensée considère agissant.
- et le sujet simplement logique et grammatical, qui est celui qu'on rapporte au prédicat."

[4] "Pour la même sémantèse, le départ pourra être pris à un support appartenant à la classe de l'animé, pensé agissant, actif, ou à un support appartenant à la classe de l'inanimé, pensé non agissant, passif, simple thème d'évocation d'un phénomène. On met ici le doigt sur le caractère double, hétérogène, de la fonction sujet, qui peut correspondre à la fonction de sujet dynamique ou à celle de sujet logique." (Moignet 1973: 376).

[5] The animate/inanimate distinction is an important one in language. Dubois (1967) claims that there is a spontaneous tendency to keep the order Animate → Inanimate, which makes the following sentences:

(1) La bonne a brisé la potiche
(2) Un piéton a été renversé par une voiture

more natural than their passive or active counterparts:

(3) La potiche a été brisée par la bonne
(4) Une voiture a renversé un pieton. (Stéfanini 1971: 122). And in a 1968 paper, Lyons suggests that highly similar deep structures, differing only in an Animate/Inanimate distinction, underlie quite dissimilar surface forms.

(continued...)

The nature of the evidence would be some indication of a conflict between the natural dynamism of a given word with its logical, or grammatical function. In

(9) Pierre frappe le sol,

there is no such conflict. Pierre, as animate and subject, incorporates both logical and dynamic functions, as does le sol, which is inanimate and object. But in

(10) Pierre frappe Paul,

there is disharmony. Paul is dynamic in an adynamic position, an animate being supporting an effective incidence. However, it appears that the logical case of object is enough to support this incidence, and that harmony between logic and dynamism in the object is not absolutely necessary in French. In Spanish, on the other hand, it is necessary. The mechanism of incidence does not operate in Spanish when there is disharmony of function in the object. Incidence is suspended before it can reach an animate object, and a preposition, which is called into play whenever normal operations of incidence fail to operate for some reason, is required between verb and object. (Guillaumé 1971(B): 171). So instead of French:

(11) Je maltraite les chiens,

in Spanish one says:

(12) Maltrato a los perros.

The inanimate
(5) book + (be) table + locative
would give the surface form:
(6) The book is on the table,
whereas the Animate
(7) book + (be) John + locative
would give:
(8) John has the book. (Lyons 1968: 495-503).

(i.e. Je maltraite (à les) aux chiens.) (Guillaume 1971 (B): 171).

That is, a verb in Spanish which is transitive when its object is inanimate becomes intransitive when its object is animate, a preposition being the marker of intransitivity.[6] Thus, the disharmony on the notional level between dynamic situation and logical function finds a grammatical correlation in the variation of the verb from transitive to intransitive.

Another example of the grammatical consequences of a distinction between animate and inanimate occurs in some Amerindian languages. In Cree, for example, when an animate third person possesses an inanimate, the inanimate is not marked for obviation, because it is already subordinate in the hierarchy Animate -- Inanimate. In the following examples of inanimate possessee:

nimasinahikan : my book
kimasinahikan : thy book
omasinahikan : his book

none of the possessees is marked for obviation. But when the possessee is animate, the hierarchy Animate → Inanimate is no longer possible and is superceded by a hierarchy of 3rd Person Proximate → 3rd Person Obviative, and the possessee is thus made grammatically subordinate to the possessor.

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6 "The preposition 'a' normally indicates the indirect object....It is also used, however, with a direct object if the latter is a definitely known person or personified object: ayer vi a su hermano - yesterday I saw your brother." (Pei and Vaquero 1955: 215).

nika'wiy : my mother
kika'wiy : thy mother
oka'wiya : his mother
obviative marker

(Hewson: Personal Communication)

But such correlation between grammatical form and an Animate/Inanimate distinction does not operate between verb and object in French.

In the process of giving a grammatical form to the sémantèse, there may be grammatical reference to indicate one or both of the supports for verbal incidence within the verb itself, such reference indicating the participants in a process. A verb in French is formed in relation to the support for the causative incidence, and carries reference therefore to the subject only. Certain languages however incorporate reference to the dynamic object (hereafter called patient, despite the fact that patient does not distinguish animate from inanimate) within the verb itself. In many Caucasian and American Indian languages for instance, the verb itself contains a marker of the object of the process,[7] while in Basque, the patient in a transitive sémantèse is not distinguished in form from the subject of an intransitive sémantèse, as is typical in ergative systems. In a polarised (i.e. transitive) sémantèse, two participants are formally distinguished. One is the patient, the other is the agent (i.e.

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[7] "Ce qui caractérise en propre le verbe indo-européen est qu'il ne porte référence qu'au sujet, non à l'objet. A la différence du verbe des langues caucasiennes ou amérindiennes par exemple, celui-ci n'inclut pas d'indice signalant le terme (ou l'objet) du procès." (Benveniste 1950: 122).

dynamic subject). The patient is expressed using a nominative marker, the same case as for the subject of an intransitive process, whereas the agent in the transitive process is expressed in a special case, the ergative.

Example, with roots go- = 'stay', and kus- = 'see'

1. Intransitive Process

I stay = nago { n(a) = I + "voyelle de liaison" / go = stay }, He stays=dago { d(a) = He + "voyelle de liaison", go = stays }

2. Transitive Process

He sees me = nakus { n(a) = me / kus = sees / ∅ - Third-person agent is unmarked in a transitive process. }

He sees him = d(a) kus

I see him = d(a) kus(a)t

(Examples from Lafon 1970-71:334).

Thus, the prefixes of the subject in an intransitive process indicate the patient in a transitive process. (Lafon 1970-71: 332). For speakers of languages whose verbs have grammatical reference in them only to the subject, and which change form according to the active/passive status of the subject, the Basque system of expressing agent and patient may seem strange, for the active participant in a process is not conceived as the one having the closest relation to the predicate. (Martinet 1958: 387). Lafon, however, suggests that perhaps it is not so strange to consider a process from the patient's point

of view. Instead of thinking

A (agent) sees B (patient),

one can consider that B, who is the object of an act of vision on the part of A, is modified somehow as a result of being seen, and that the interest in the situation is centred on B. (Lafon 1970-71: 334-335). The patient is notionally bound by the verb, the agent is not.

The Basque solution to the question of how to treat grammatically the causative and effective supports of the verbal semantèse is just one way of indicating the roles of participants in a process. Galichet, taking an avowedly mentalistic point of view in searching for the "psychologie" underlying language, believes that a verb, which he defines as the expression of an idea as a process (Galichet 1967: 36) can be considered from either of its two end-points, the "agent" producing the action or the "object" receiving the action. The grammatical category which consists in considering the process in terms of its direction in relation to the two psychologically fixed and symmetrical points of "agent" and "object" is the category of voice. (Galichet 1967: 38). When the process is considered from its origin (agent) the verb is in the active voice, and when considered from its finishing point (object), the verb is in the passive voice. The active voice is thus a "downstream" or 'efferent' view, which he schematizes as: agent ⟶ process ⟶ object, while the passive voice is the "upstream" or 'afferent' view, illustrated as: object ⟶ process ⟶ agent. (Galichet 1967:

101). In order to make sense of these ideas, it is necessary to realize that Galichet is using the term 'object' improperly. 'Object' is a grammatical term only; in the sense of 'finishing point' of a process, the term to use is 'patient', which refers to a notional category.

There are at least three serious implications in such a view. The first is that voice for Galichet is a semantic category which bears little relation to the syntactic facts. The wide view which encompasses both ends of the sémantèse in a theory of voice ignores the fact that in French a verb is grammaticalized only in relation to the grammatical subject, (Guillaume's 'logical' subject), and does not have grammatical cross-reference in it to an object. And, as was pointed out in chapter one, the status of object is so difficult to define that in a particular sentence there are no sure syntactic criteria which one can use to define an object.[8] Semantic criteria alone, including context, permit such definition. In other words, there is nothing in the observable form of the French verb which justifies including in the category of voice the notions of agent, process and patient (object), when all that can be observed is a particular relation of subject with verb.

The second implication is more serious. It is that what is assumed here is the primacy of notion over form. Instead of working from observations and deducing from them the

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[8] He admits himself that "l'objet est, on le conçoit..., souvent proche des notions de but, de conséquence et même de cause." (Galichet 1967: 143).

structures or ideas underlying surface forms, (which is the method followed by Damourette and Pichon[9]), Galichet appears to establish an a priori mental category and then apply it to the forms observable in language. This kind of reasoning is unscientific, because it proceeds from the inferrable to the observable, instead of vice versa, and is therefore rooted in speculation, not empirical fact. Statements made on this basis are of limited applicability only. Thus, if voice is just a notional category, then a sentence whose logical subject is patient is by definition passive. By this reasoning then, the following sentence:

(13) Le peuple endure les pires tortures

is passive, despite the form of the verb, since notionally le peuple is in a position of passivity, being the object of les pires tortures. And logically, an active sentence would result from reversing the direction of the sentence to

(14) Les pires tortures sont endurées par le peuple.

But les pires tortures is not "agent" of the process, nor is it the "object". And if the sentence does not conform with any pre-conception as to the direction of the action, then what kind of sentence is it? This is a question which goes unanswered in Galichet (because unasked), and underlines with force the danger of proceeding from the idea to the form, that is, from mental categories to grammatical categories.

The third implication is that the number of voice categories established is too small. A subject in Galichet's view

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[9] "Notre methode grammaticale...induit de la langue elle-même les conceptions profondes habitant le sentiment linguistique des locuteurs." (Damourette and Pichon 1911-36: 661).

can be "agent' or it can be "object". Might there not occur cases in which the instigator of a given action also underwent the consequences of that action, being therefore simultaneously "agent" and "object"? This possibility is dismissed as being a particular case of active voice (Galichet 1967: 102) and so no attempt is made to see if this idea perhaps has a morphology of its own.[10]

It is obvious then that in a discussion of voice, a clear distinction must be made between notion and form, between the situation as conceived by the mind and the means of representing that situation in French. In order to maintain clarity therefore, the term 'diathesis'[11] will be used to refer to the nature of the grammatical relationship between the nominal causative support and the sémantèse.[12] This relationship of grammatical subject to verb can be one of agent to process, patient to process, or agent and patient simultaneously to process. The term 'voice' will be used when referring to the grammatical form assumed by the verb in the expression of the

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[10] The same sort of limited view appears also to be the one adopted by the Le Bidois: "On peut présenter l'action comme faite par quelqu'un ou comme subie par quelqu'un. D'où la distinction consacrée de l'actif et du passif. A cette différence de présentation correspond la catégorie grammaticale de voix; on entend par là une forme spéciale de conjugaison propre à chacun des DEUX (my emphasis) caractères que peut offrir l'action." (Le Bidois 1968: 405).

[11] "The traditional Greek term for 'voice' as a category of the verb was diathesis, 'state', 'disposition', 'function', etc; and some linguists prefer to use 'diathesis' rather than 'voice' in this sense of the term." (Lyons 1969: 372).

[12] For Moignet, diathesis is "le rapport qui s'établit entre le procès et son support nominal...." (Moignet 1965:135).

nature of the relationship between causative support and sémantèse. Diathesis refers to the notion, voice to the form.

The distinction is necessary for at least two reasons. The first is that confusion can and does arise among grammarians, the term 'voice' often being made to serve for both the idea and the expression of the idea. Secondly, it appears that there is no coherent grammatical system of expressing diathesis in French. Blinkenberg points out that there is often disharmony between "the double point of view of the conceptual substratum of diathesis and of the form which constitutes diathesis as a grammatical fact." (Blinkenberg 1960: 37 tr.).

For instance, the neutral, unmarked form of the verb called the active voice (je poursuis as opposed to je suis poursuivi) is not exclusively reserved for active notions (i.e. subject is agent of the process). Stefanini (1971:113) notes that the Latin vapulo - 'I am beaten', 'je reçois des coups' - is active voice despite being passive from a common sense point of view, and that popular or slang French has produced active voice / passive diathesis verbs indicating the same thing.[13]

Similarly, in the expression of the notion: subject

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[13] encaisser = accepter, supporter, tolérer. "Encaisser le coup" = accepter la chose. "Encaisser des gnions" = recevoir des coups
déguster - "Déguster un coup de tronche dans le buffet" = recevoir un coup de tête dans l'estomac
dérouiller = coiter. "Je n'ai pas encore dérouillé" = je n'ai pas encore 'levé' un client.

not agent of the process, there are a number of forms which can be produced. The verb by its semantic content may demand a patient as subject. cf. Jean meurt, in which the subject 'Jean' undergoes the process of dying. Or a verb may accept as causative support a noun not usually associated with this more normally agentive position. This procedure of "changement d'acception" (Damourette and Pichon: 661) can produce a sentence like:

(15) Cette étoffe lave bien,

giving what Halliday calls a "process-oriented verb", which "characterizes the process as such, either a qualification of it or a generalization about its feasibility." (Halliday 1967 I: 47).[14]

Another way is to make a given verb depend on another. By this "immixtion" (Damourette and Pichon: 161), 'laver' can be modified to 'faire laver', 'voir laver', etc. The most productive way to embody the notion of subject NOT agent is through a change in verbal voice. Tuer, for example, will accept a patient as subject, when its form is modified to être tué. Finally, there are many verbs expressing diathetical change without any morphological change. Plier accepts an agent or a patient as subject without any change

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[14] A propos of this same 'neuter' sentence, Stefanini remarks that the subject appears to be neither agent nor patient of the process. "En effet, le verbe lie ici le concept de lavage à celui d'étoffe. Le sujet par rapport au verbe n'apparaît ni comme un véritable agent ni comme un véritable patient." (Stéfanini 1962: 118). Compare these ambiguous English sentences:

(16) He makes a good meal
(17) He takes a good photograph
(18) It washes well (Anderson 1968: 10).

in form.[15] cf.:

(19) Jean plie la branche
(20) La branche plie. (Blinkenberg 1960: 35).[16]

And just as a notion may be associated with several different means of expression, one form may be associated with several different notions. In

(21) J'étouffe le feu,

the diathesis is active, since the subject is agent of a transitive process. In

(22) J'étouffe de chaleur,

however, the diathesis is passive, since the subject is patient of the process. And in

(23) J'étouffe ici

the subject can be thought of as both producing the action of smothering (perhaps as a result of entering a "stuffy" room!) and undergoing the consequences of the action. Though the voice is active, the diathesis might be said to be implicitly middle. (Examples from Blinkenberg 1960: 38).

Failure to establish and maintain a distinction between

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[15] "Le fait est attribuable au caractère flou, non systématisé, de la sémantèse, à sa souplesse, à sa fluidité....Le même phénomène...peut s'interpréter en sémantèse conclusive sur elle-même ou en sémantèse susceptible d'expansion." (Moignet 1973: 375).

[16] The "verbes à retournement" have the characteristic of being transitive when the subject is agent, and intransitive when the subject is patient. (Gougenheim 1969: 254). The number of such verbs is relatively small in French when a very large corpus is considered, but they are of high frequency in general use. In a recent thesis, Mira Rothemberg (Wagner 1970-72) found that, of 6440 verbs examined, almost 300 (4.65%) were 'symmetrical' or "verbes à renversement". When the lists of Français Fondamental were considered, the proportion increased noticeably - 40 out of 400 for FF2 (or 10%) and 60 out of 293 (or 20.5%) for FF1 - a remarkable example of linguistic economy (Wagner 1970-72: 82).

diathesis and voice brings some grammarians to make assertions like: "The truth is that the (French) language does not possess a passive voice...." (Sauvageot 1962:135 tr.). In fact, the statement is not ridiculous or facetious, because the point Sauvageot is making is that there is no coherent system of expressing the notion of passivity in French.[17] The passive periphrastic construction certainly permits a patient as subject, but other forms in the language seem to be indifferently active or passive according to their intrinsic sense. Thus the infinitive, and the past and present participles, can be found with active or passive meanings, because diathesis "is not a feature of the morphology of the quasi-nominals." (Tesnière 1969: 245 tr.). In the following examples, the infinitive, normally active, has a passive notion associated with it:

(24) Ce livre reste à écrire (= à être écrit) (Sauvageot 1962: 135)

(25) Si votre fer a besoin de nettoyer, frottez-le avec... (Tesnière 1969: 245 - from Midi Libre 16 May 1949).

The present participle "is so far removed from the system of voice that it can even apply...to a circumstantial complement." (Tesnière 1969: 246 tr.). The participle cassant is active in "un ton cassant", but "a piece of glass is cassante not because it actively breaks something else, but because

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[17] Galichet makes much the same point when he notes that: "Le système d'expression de la voix en français est donc peu homogène et ne permet pas de discerner celle-ci à partir des formes verbales." (Galichet 1967: 103).

it is liable to be broken by something."[18] And in "une rue passante", passante is neither active - "une rue qui passe" - nor passive - "une rue qui est passée", - but "une rue où l'on passe beaucoup". (Tesnière 1969: 246). Finally, the past participle can be found with both active and passive senses, "the active sense being provided by intransitive verbs and the passive sense by transitive verbs". (Sauvageot 1962: 131 tr.). Thus des oeufs pourris implies no agent in the rotting process. But des oeufs battus are eggs which, it is implied, have been beaten by someone else. (Sauvageot 1962: 131). Even this distinction on the basis of transitivity breaks down in the "telegraphic" style, e.g.:

(26) Vu Hélène, tout arrangé. (Blinkenberg 1960: 43)

The conclusion to be reached from these data however should not be that there is no such thing as a passive voice. The passive periphrastic construction, despite its similarity with the more general construction of the verb être with an attributive adjective, agreeing in gender and number with the subject, (Sauvageot 1962: 130), will admit an agentive complement, which an adjectival construction will not, and cannot be compared in the same way that an être + adjective construction can be. If the past participle belongs to a verbal category, in so far as it resists modification by degrees of comparison, or by 'très' as suggested by Martin

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[18] "une pièce de verre est cassante, non parce qu'elle opère activement une cassure sur un autre objet, mais au contraire lorsqu'elle est susceptible 'd'être cassée' par lui." (Tesnière 1969: 245).

and Moignet,[19] then the passive voice does indeed exist as a verb form with a more or less consistent semantic content (i.e. patient as subject). What has to be recognized is that the expression of passivity is not confined to this one verb form.

Passivity may be a feature of the semantic content of the verb itself. Martin (1971) points out that certain sémanteses are by nature passive, just as others are active, in the sense that they reflect "a passive attitude, exclusively from their semantic content." (Martin 1971: 62 tr.). As opposed to such active verbs as agir, marcher, faire, etc., verbs such as subir, souffrir, obéir, and perhaps dormir, suivre, and accepter interpret notions which are primarily passive. The question which comes to mind is what does the role of the grammatical passive construction consist of if the opposition of active and passive can be expressed at the level of the lexicon? (Martin 1971: 63). Does this construction then invariably express the patient as subject? Martin concludes that the function of this construction is to assure the inversion of agent and patient at the level of the sentence in such a way that if, in the active voice, the grammatical subject is agent, it becomes patient in the passive voice. But if in the active voice the subject is patient, it becomes

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19 "...La possibilité d'affecter le participe des degrés de l'adjectif prouve qu'il s'éloigne de la catégorie du verbe." (Martin 1963: 37). "M.Moignet nous suggère à ce propos le rapprochement avec le substantif attribut que l'impuissance à fournir des degrés de comparaison apparente à l'adjectif verbal." (Martin 1963: 38).

the agent in the passive voice.[20] In:

(27a) Le chasseur poursuit le lièvre. which becomes:

(27b) Le lièvre est poursuivi par le chasseur.

the subject of (a) is agent, while the subject of (b) is patient. Whereas in:

(28a) Le peuple endure avec courage les plus terribles souffrances

which changes to:

(28b) Les plus terribles souffrances sont endurées par le peuple avec courage. (Examples from Martin 1971: 63)

the subject of (a) is patient while the subject of (b) (according to Martin) is agent.

However, while it appears easy to agree that the passive periphrastic construction seems to "operate a split in the natural harmony between grammatical subject and the active or passive sense of the verb" (Martin 1971: 63 tr.), it is difficult to accept that "les plus terribles souffrances" is a notional agent of the process "sont endurées", given that an agent is usually endowed with an active capability attributable only to an animate being. And also, in Le peuple endure, the subject is at least partially agent: to endure requires persistance, which is an active quality. Perhaps a sentence like Le boxeur a reçu des coups de son adversaire. would have been a better illustration of Martin's thesis. It might be more reasonable to suggest that the true

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[20] "Etre est le signe sous lequel s'opère la rupture d'harmonie entre le sujet grammatical et le sens actif ou passif du verbe." (Martin 1971: 63).

nature of the passive construction is to permit the support of effective incidence of a transitive sémantèse to be promoted to the position of grammatical subject, with the causative support either remaining unexpressed or being expressed with an agentive complement using de or par. This more abstract view avoids the necessity of assigning an agent to a sentence in which the role of agent is either not clear or ambiguous.

Just as the transitivity of a verb has been defined in terms of the presence of an effective support for the resultative incidence, so is the category of voice defined by the relation of this effective incidence to the grammatical subject. An active transitive verb is one whose effective limit is outside of the sémantèse in an external support which is different from the causative support (subject). This incidence, which is the unfolding of immanent time subtending the verb from the beginning of the event to the end (Stéfanini 1971: 111) is a build-up of result. This build-up, which implies an easing of tension throughout the movement[21], finally releases that tension by equating result with object (i.e. the external effective support) in a transitive active verb (Stéfanini 1971: 111). In the active voice therefore, the

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[21] "Si un verbe notionnel, en général, est la forme linguistique opérant la mutation d'une causation active en une effection passive, on reconnaîtra qu'il implique une tension; cette tension intacte et intégrale au départ, s'accompagne d'une détension croissante à mesure qu'elle progresse et décroît, pour s'abolir totalement au profit d'une détension pure à l'arrivée...." (Moignet 1973: 367).

verb "exteriorizes its limit of tension" (Molho 1965: 195 tr.) and presents a process in its natural orientation[22] of before to after, of cause to effect. (Molho 1965: 196). But there is no impediment to presenting a process from the opposite point of view, from the vantage point of "acquired effect" instead of "acquiring effect" (Molho 1965: 196 tr.). This afterview can be provided by the passive periphrastic construction, where the limit of verbal tension is the subject rather than the object.[23] One of the features of the passive is that it includes within the syntactically-linked pair, subject-verb, the "image of a limit of its operation" (Molho 1965: 195) (i.e. of its result). When the result is predicated of the subject, the auxiliary être is used to indicate that the limit of verbal tension is internal.[24] And to indicate that the limit of tension has been reached and can be crossed, the past participle is used (Molho 1965: 195), because it is the "decadent" verbal form which, having expended all its potential, has come to the end of its tension and reached its limit, to be "resuscitated" by the auxiliary. (Wilmet 1972: 52).

The semantic nature of the forms used in this construction imply certain restrictions in the type of verbal image which can be presented. Because verbal tension in the passive voice

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[22] Guillaume speaks of this natural orientation as being a "successivité non temporelle de caractère logique..." (Guillaume UL, 21 March 46: 302).

[23] "Le passif pose comme sujet le mot limite de tension verbale: la maison est construite (par les maçons)." Stéfanini 1971: 111).

[24] "L'auxiliaire 'être' est le signe commun à l'aspect transcendant de tout procès portant en lui-même sa limite de tension...."(Moignet 1965: 136).

finds its limit in the subject, the image of time presented by the verb will be one of two possible images. The process can be seen as finished or as continuing to reach its finish (Stéfanini 1971: 114) depending on whether the verb is conceived of as perfective (materially complete) or imperfective (materially incomplete). Thus être construit presents a finished state of affairs, while the image of être aimé is that of a state of affairs in the process of finishing, considered from the point of view of its duration. (Stéfanini 1971: 114).

To present a perfective notion like être construit without complements, as an on-going process, is therefore impossible with this construction. To be sure, there is an on-going sense in:

(29) Au Canada les maisons sont construites en bois

but this sense is absent if en bois is removed. The perfectivity of the verb itself precludes the notion of verbal tension continuing to reach its limit. And since the construction contains "a past participle marking the end of the process in complete release of tension" (Stéfanini 1962: 125 tr.), it cannot express all the possible nuances allowed by the time-image of the present tense, which can, for instance, normally contain a 'parcel' of future time.

(30) Il vient demain

is acceptable, but:

(31) La maison est construite demain

is not, since it presents a 'downstream', 'decadent' view of time.

Values which can be assumed by the être and past participle construction therefore are representations:

(a) of a state of affairs: La maison est bâtie

(b) of an action viewed from the point of view of the patient, a purely passive process: La maison est bâtie par de bons maçons.

(c) of a process pure and simple: Il est bâti en France plusieurs dizaines de milliers de maisons par an. (Stéfanini 1962: 477).

These values are not just the result of the passive sentence being a transformation of a transitive active sentence. It is a fallacy to assume that the periphrastic passive has a deep structure identical with some corresponding active sentence having the same meaning. This assumption, called "probably the most glaring instance of over-simplification concerning linguistic meaning" (Hewson, Towards a General Theory of Meaning: Forthcoming: 22), confuses referential with linguistic meaning, and results from the fact that active and passive sentences like

(32) Paul aime Marie. and (33) Marie est aimee de (par) Paul. "may be used to refer to the same external situation. It is in reference that they are identical, not in linguistic meaning." (Hewson ibid.: 23).

The independence of the passive is supported by two proofs. First, there are many sentences which "have no satisfactory active or passive correlate." (Hewson ibid.: 22). For example:

(34) Il a perdu sa femme. (- in the sense that: His wife has died)

(35) Le château est restauré. (- in a perfective sense). Secondly, a theory which would mechanically derive the subject of a passive from the object of an active encounters an insurmountable difficulty in explaining expressions like:

(36) Il à été procédé à l'élection du président. (Moignet 1971: 281). This passive poses no problem if it is recognized that voice has to do with the relation between the personal support and the sémantèse,[25] and not with a simple P (passive) marker in the deep structure effecting a "meaning-preserving transformation"[26] to account for different surface forms for otherwise identical sentences. Donaldson's claim that "passives are not derived from actives but rather from underlying p-markers containing a semantically vacuous passive marker" and that in "all other respects, however, the deep structure underlying actives and passives are the same" (Donaldson 1973: 77) is a very glaring oversimplification of the type already mentioned.

The real subject of example (36) is "il"; it is not an apparent, stand-in, substitute subject of a 'real'subject

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[25] "...la voix a trait, moins à la nature propre du sujet, qu'à la situation que l'esprit humain lui attribue, relativement au verbe en logique constructive de phrase. La situation attribuée au support obligé du verbe est celle de sujet logique. Elle montre le sujet logique - celui dont on parle, sans considération particulière de condition dynamique - aux prises avec l'événement. Là est l'origine - unique origine - de ce qu'on appelle en grammaire la voix". (Guillaume 1971(B): 175).

[26] "...since transformations are meaning-preserving, elements added or adjoined to transformations should not contribute any meaning to the sentence containing them." (Donaldson 1973: 80).

presented after the verb. The real subject here is the universal person. The sémantèse, rejecting any notions of activity, therefore refuses to seek a human person as causative support. The lack of active capacity in the universal person leaves the sémantèse free to express its resultative side only (Moignet 1971: 279), and consequently, the whole sémantèse is passive. This passivity is then predicated of a noun in the object position, which is thus denied the "residue of activity attaching to the function of subject, starting point and cause of the process" (Moignet 1971: 280 tr.), and rendered more passive in the unipersonal construction than it could be in the pluripersonal passive.[27]

But while it seems clear that the passive voice is not just some meaningless mechanical transformation of the active voice, it also appears that there is a connection between passive voice and transitive verbs, in the sense that, for most sémantèses, the effective incidence of the active voice can become the causative incidence in the passive voice (Moignet 1973: 370). A special morphology has been created to express the passive diathesis, using être to indicate variations in tense as well as an inner limit of verbal tension, and a past participle which in most respects behaves like an attributive adjective. This morphology is, according to Guillaume, a late

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[27] The status of impersonal expressions has often been minimized. They are perhaps best seen as sémantèses which, because of semantic constraints, choose not to seek a human support for causative incidence. In evoking a process as a process, the universal person symbolized by il provides the minimum personal base necessary. (Moignet 1973: 366).

development in language. (Guillaume 1973(C): 119) ("un phénomène tardif"). "The invention of a passive voice, both semiologically and mentally, is not a fait accompli in Latin. It is something which will only develop in French." (Guillaume 1971(B): 177 tr.). The evolution which Indo-European languages seem to have followed is from a situation with no morphological voice distinctions to one with a single contrast of active forms on the one hand, and non-active forms on the other, these non-active forms serving to translate both a passive and a middle notion. (Hewson, 1975-76: 1). The creation of the passive seems then to be the response to a problem, that of expressing a three-part diathesis: subject active, passive, and both active and passive (or middle) with a two-part morphology: active (or unmarked) and non-active. Questions naturally arise about the nature of the middle notions expressed by these forms, and about how such middle notions are expressed in modern French.

CHAPTER THREE: MIDDLE VOICE

Theoretical Structure

In discussions by grammarians on middle voice, one thing stands out as common to all definitions. There seems to be agreement that the subject of a middle voice form in the classical languages is not simply performing an action but is intimately involved with the action to a greater or lesser degree. The subject is more than just the instigator of the process denoted by the verb; he is bound up in the process in some way. Lyons (1969: 373) observes that "the implications of the middle (when it is in opposition with the active) are that the 'action' or 'state' affects the subject of the verb or his interests." For Frei, "the value of the middle was that of 'interested subject', that is, taking part subjectively in the process expressed by the verb." (Frei 1971: 245 tr.). Gamillscheg proposed a quasi-metaphysical definition by saying that middle voice served to indicate a change or process taking place in the subject through the agency of an ineffable force, which could for instance be supernatural and therefore inexpressible.[1]

But none of these definitions is fully satisfactory. Those who define the middle as expressing effectively the

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[1] "Pour Gamillscheg et ses élèves, le moyen indique qu'un changement, qu'un procès, s'accomplit dans le sujet, sous l'action d'une force qui échappe aux sens, par exemple, surnaturelle, et par là-même, inexprimable." (Stéfanini 1962: 335).

interest which the agent has in the process will encounter a number of objections. First, this special interest is hard to perceive in a great number of middle voice forms. Stéfanini notes that this traditional definition of middle "does not satisfy the philologist, because it holds only for a relatively restricted number of forms." (Stéfanini 1962: 384 tr.). Second, the definition is not strictly syntactic because the notion of subject's interest in the action is psychological only. Third, the definition does not stand in clear enough contrast to the values associated with the active voice. And finally, the definition does not make clear to what extent the subject of a middle verb can be considered passive.[2]

A more concrete and plausible explanation is offered in Benveniste's contrast of the values associated with active voice and middle voice. "In the active, verbs denote a process which, having originated in the subject, takes place outside of him. In the middle, which is the diathesis to define by contrast, the verb indicates a process of which the subject is the centre; the subject is interior to the process ....the subject is the centre while at the same time actor of the process; he does something which is done in him, be born, sleep, imagine, etc. He is within the process of which he is agent." (Benveniste 1950: 125-126 tr.). And echoing this idea,

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[2] "La définition traditionelle...fait intervenir la notion toute psychologique d'intérêt du sujet dans l'action..., ne se présente pas comme symétrique et antithétique de celle de l'actif auquel elle s'oppose,...et ne vaut pas pour les deux sens du terme "moyen", le large...et l'étroit."(Stéfanini 1962:384).

for modern French, is Blinkenberg's "introverted action" whereby "the action happens in the subject", as opposed to extroverted action which "goes from the subject towards the outside", and action undergone, which is "directed towards the subject." (Blinkenberg 1960: 37 tr.).

The observations made by Benveniste and Blinkenberg are much closer to the point, but they need to be expanded much further in order that a clear and comprehensive idea may be had of the middle diathesis and its expression in middle voice. It must be kept in mind that the middle is closely related to both active and passive. Active voice has its particular value because the causative incidence of the sémantèse has a support which combines the two functions of logical and dynamic subject, while passive voice refuses to allow this combination, placing the dynamic subject elsewhere than in the logical support.[3] But Guillaume points out that an essential condition for the passive voice is that the separation of logical and dynamic functions must be complete.[4] The consequence of a partial split - of a logical subject which is only partly dynamic (or agentive), is the creation in language of forms to express this particular situation of the subject. These forms, called middle voice, "present us with a logical subject who remains dynamic, since he performs

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[3] "La voix active, c'est celle qui place sur un même support les fonctions de sujet logique et de sujet dynamique. La voix passive - celle 'qui' n'opère pas cette réunion, et qui place la fonction de sujet dynamique là où n'est pas celle de sujet logique." (Guillaume UL, 9 April 1948: 2).

[4] "Mais, pour qu'il y ait passif, il faut que la disjonction (des fonctions) soit totale." (Guillaume UL, 9 April 1948: 12).

actions, but who, in the very performance of those actions, seems to be performing them in accordance with a system which he does not fully control....At the origin of middle voice is the impression that we guide events, then that events, to a certain extent, take over and guide us."[5]

If it is a universal of perception that man is both confronted by the outside world and engaged actively in confronting it, and if such perceptions are reflected in language, then perhaps it is true to say that the earliest forms of Indo-European did not mark voice differences morphologically.[6] This apparent paucity of forms may have been less as a result of primitive thinking and unclear perception than one might suppose; indeed, it may have been a remarkable measure of linguistic economy. For Guillaume contends that "in the course of human activity, both impressions, that of leading and that of being led, are linked to one another in a way which is no more than a matter of proportion," and that "at the origin of voice there is a situation in which the logical subject is <u>at the same time</u> perceived to be leading and led, that is, in a middle situation, liable to be resolved in one

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[5] "La voix moyenne nous met en présence d'un sujet logique, demeuré dynamique, vu qu'il agit, mais qui, dans son action même, apparaît obéir à une conduction qui ne lui appartient pas exclusivement....A l'origine de la voix moyenne, il y a le sentiment que nous menons les événements, les événements nous le rendent, et nous mènent à leur tour."(Guillaume UL, 9 April 1948: 4).

[6] "...l'indo-européen le plus primitif ne marquait pas les différences de voix (surtout l'actif et le passif) qu'on trouve presque universellement dans les langues actuelles de la famille indo-européenne." (Hewson, Voix Moyenne:1).

direction or another." (Guillaume 1973(B): 175 tr.). In other words, the one series of forms seems to have served to express active and passive notions.[7] At a later stage in the development of Indo-European, a contrast was established between two voice forms, active and medio-passive (Hewson, Voix Moyenne: 1), the latter serving to express the notion that the subject was less than full agent of the process. These medio-passive forms served a dual purpose therefore in the expression of both middle notions and passive notions. The subject of a classical medio-passive verb could be partially agent or completely patient of a given process, depending on the situation to be expressed.

An illuminating example of dual-purpose morphology is provided by Latin. A non-active verb in Latin can be deponent - used for ostensibly active notions, or passive - used for passive notions. The remarkable thing is that both deponents and passives share the same morphology: amor = I am loved; loquor = I speak.[8] But this active diathesis expressed by a medio-passive form reveals itself upon examination to be somewhat less than active. The activity of the subject of Latin deponents seems to be tinged with passivity, and the logical subject appears to be only partly dynamic. The subject

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[7] "La voix moyenne est une voix qui oscille de l'actif au passif et peut selon qu'on accorde la prédominance à l'un ou l'autre des deux termes, signifier respectivement soit l'actif soit le passif." (Guillaume 1973(B): 176).

[8] "La voix déponente latine est celle où une sémiologie restée moyenne recouvre un psychisme actif. Et dans ses grandes lignes la voix passive latine est une voix où une sémiologie restée moyenne recouvre un psychisme passif. (Guillaume 1973, (B): 177).

of loquor is freely agent when he speaks, since he says what he pleases when he pleases. But he is also bound by the rules and conventions of language, which constrain him to speak in a certain way. (Hewson: personal communication). And the subject of sequor is not wholly free to go wherever he pleases; since his course is determined by his quarry.[9]

The essential feature of the subject of a middle-voice verb is the preservation of some of the activity associated with the agent of active verbs along with the addition of a certain passivity with regard to the process denoted by the verb. The question sometimes arises of how much activity can be attributed to such a subject, and conversely, how much passivity. Should a verb be considered middle only if the proportions of activity and passivity combined in the subject are so entangled as to be uninterpretable? Should a subject which is, for example, 25% active only (assuming such a quantification to be possible) be assumed to be primarily passive, and classified as such? Should a subject only tinged with passivity be considered active? The problem of establishing

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[9] Anna Granville Hatcher makes much the same point in discussing differences in the notional content of active and deponent verbs. For her, deponent verbs involve the subject much more than active verbs, which tend to portray the subject simply as performing an activity in which he has no interest. "In contrast to active verbs, which represent an activity as having its source in the subject, as being completely determined by the nature of the subject, the deponent represents rather an experience or situation into which the subject enters." (Hatcher 1942: 14). A propos of sequor, she says: "sequor tells us that the subject has a goal and that he is entering into his chase with purpose and desire....No longer is simple 'activity' involved." (Hatcher 1942: 15). She has perceived a difference, but unfortunately describes it in non-syntactic terms.

lines of demarcation between these proportions is probably impossible to resolve. By way of example, say that in a given language the concept of "to drown" were expressed by a verb with a middle voice morphology. Would it not be pointless to say that the victim of an accidental drowning was 95% bound and 5% free, whereas the ratios were reversed for a suicide drowning? The fact that the person who committed suicide also knew how to swim, but chose not to, may push up the proportion to 99% free and 1% bound; an overtired bather may be said to be 45% free and 55% bound; a captain who goes down with his ship 75% free and 25% bound, etc. In other words, assigning degrees of activity and passivity is fruitless; it is completely non-linguistic and is a matter of context unexpressed by the immediate forms.

Arguments along the same lines are sometimes raised by grammarians who deny the existence of a middle voice in French. Confronted by the morphology of middle voice they declare forms which are completely similar to be either active or passive. A middle-voice verb whose subject was primarily agent would be pronounced active, while a verb with the same formal features but whose subject was mainly patient would be considered passive. Ruwet (1972), in attempting to derive French middle voice forms from widely divergent deep structures according to surface values of passivity vs. non-passivity, is guilty of this sort of blindness in face of the facts.

What is more reasonable to say is simply that the subject of the middle voice verb can be affected by almost any degree

of activity and of passivity, in proportions decided by the needs of the situation to be expressed. The formula offered by Guillaume is:

Logical subject = agent + patient = 1

- with the proviso that neither agent nor patient can equal zero.[10]

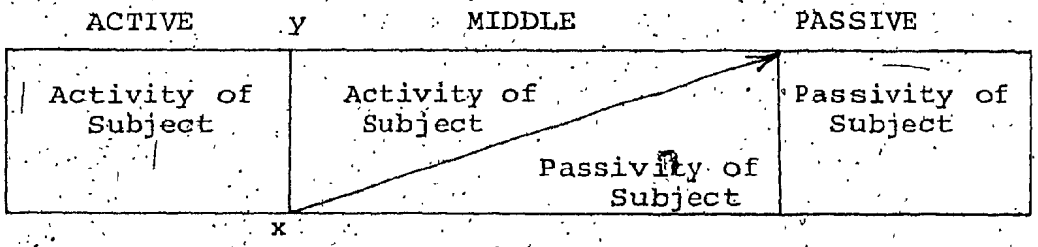
If middle voice shares the characteristics of active voice on the one hand and passive voice on the other, it also conceivably serves as a bridge between the two voices, and the subject of a middle verb should logically be able to assume any one of the intermediate values between activity and passivity. What allows for this flexibility is the fact that linguistic values are not fixed and rigid, but rather fluid movements of thought. It is one of the principles of Guillaumean linguistics that a grammatical form serves to denote NOT a strictly circumscribed notion but a movement of thought, and is therefore apt to express all the meanings corresponding with the various points along the vector which the form represents.[11] And so, just as the present is able to include in its representation notions of future, present

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[10] "La proportion relative dans l'entier un des deux situations d'agent et de patient pouvant varier autant que l'on voudra, sous la réserve que ni l'une ni l'autre des deux situations ne s'annulent complètement." (Guillaume 1971(B):202).

[11] "Et depuis les travaux de G. Guillaume nous sommes habitués à considérer qu'une forme grammaticale, qui traduit non une notion aux contours définis mais un mouvement de pensée, est susceptible d'exprimer tous les sens correspondants aux divers points caractéristiques du vecteur qu'elle représente." (Stéfanini 1962: 124).

and past time, and just as the imperfect can represent actions that did not happen as well as those that did,[12] the middle can express many values. An illustration of the possibilities might take the form of the following diagram:



(adapted from Hewson 1975-76: 4).

A given middle voice verb can theoretically intercept the vector at any point between x and y, and take its value (in discourse) from the proportion of activity and passivity associated with that point. An important implication of this view is that, at its starting point, the vector is so close to the boundary separating active from middle that it might be said to be infinitely close. The distance separating the values is so small as to be imperceptible. A middle form intercepting the vector at this point would have a notional value virtually the same as that of an active form. Thus it is conceivable that in a language which has a middle voice one will find both active and middle forms conveying obviously active meanings. Similarly, at the other end of the scale, the vector approaches infinitely closely to the border separating middle from passive, without however crossing the border. A form intercepting the movement of thought near

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[12] cf. "Un quart d'heure de plus et je devenais fou..." (Simenon 1966: 7).

this point would take on a middle value indistinguishable from the value of a passive. Middle forms may then be found with passive meanings attached to them. (See Guillaume 1971 (B): 185-188).[13]

A narrower definition of middle voice is one which includes as part of middle voice only those verbs which cannot be considered as obviously active or passive in value. Verbs close to x or close to y in the diagram, in other words, would be eliminated from consideration, despite their shared morphology. A restricted definition admits only those verbs involving a discernable mixture of activity and passivity in them. This "stricto sensu" middle "keeps the mind suspended between two clear-cut situations, both of which are avoided," (Guillaume 1969: 138 tr.) and supposes that the activity and passivity united in the subject are mingled to such an extent as to be unable to be analysed.[14] Guillaume, who first made clear the widely divergent values which the subject of a middle voice verb could assume, nonetheless prefers to use the term middle voice ("voix moyenne") as applying to this more limited definition. "The principle on which middle voice is based therefore remains constant in all observable

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[13] "Dès l'instant où une forme cumule en elle l'expression du passif et de l'actif, la part respective de chacun peut tendre vers zéro et l'autre augmenter proportionnellement." (Stéfanini 1971: 112).

[14] "Le propre du moyen est de faire de la dualité impersonnelle sujet/pronom réfléchi...un facteur de liaison, de mélange, en proportions non discernables, de ces deux fonctions concrètes (i.e. de sujet et d'objet). (Guillaume UL, 28 March and 4 April 1946: 332).

uses. It is the principle of a process whose whole is shared between agent and patient, without the apportionment being clear enough to permit attributing the active incidence to the agent and the passive incidence to the patient." (Guillaume 1971(B): 184 tr.). Causative and effective incidence in the sémantèse of a middle voice verb both go then to the subject, and, in the strict definition of the middle, their relative weight in the subject cannot be determined. There is a similarity then between a middle verb and a transitive verb: both possess two incidences seeking supports. The difference is that the support of both incidences in a middle voice verb is the single, logical subject, whereas the transitive verb has two separate supports, one for each incidence. (Guillaume 1973(B): 190).

Whether one's definition for the middle is broad or narrow, the central fact is that it is a voice of synthesis, combining within the subject both activity and passivity[15] and deriving its different values in discourse from the variable proportions of activity and passivity possible within the same person.[16]

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15 "Le moyen suppose que le sujet en face de l'événement, dans l'événement même qu'exprime le verbe, allie en sa personne, sans en faire la séparation, la double situation d'agent ayant la conduction des choses et celle de patient que les choses conduisent." (Guillaume 1969: 138).

16 "...les différentes valeurs de discours...ne résultent plus que des variétés possibles du dosage de l'activité et de la passivité...." (Moignet 1965: 135).

Resultatives, or mixed voice

In the discussion of middle voice up to this point, it has been assumed that the subject combines the roles of agent and patient within himself simultaneously. However, nothing prevents the mind from conceiving of a sémantèse such that the subject, at one time in the unfolding of verbal tension, is the completely free agent of the process, while at another time its completely bound patient. This particular middle situation is the property of a small number of verbs in French, which can be called "resultatives" or "mixed voice" ("voix mixte").

The most striking feature of these resultative sémantèses is that the result produced by the releasing of verbal tension is not equated with an external effective support, nor with the sémantèse itself, but with the causative support - the subject. And, most important, the resultative side of such verbs is semantically linked to the subject as a qualification of it.[17] In contrast to the result of:

(1) Pierre marche.

which is nothing more than the process itself, the result of:

(2) Pierre sort.

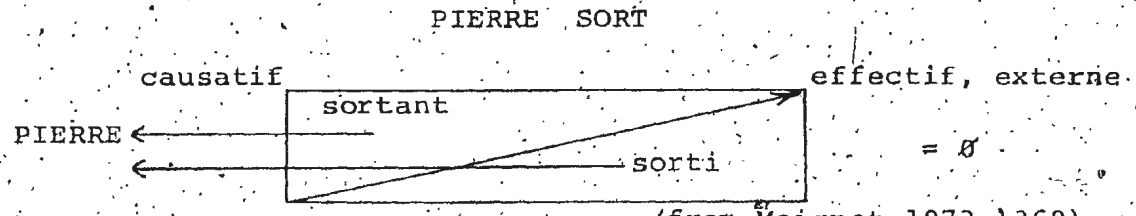
is said of Pierre. As the process goes on, it is Pierre who

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[17] "Le resultatif ne se dégage pas sémantiquement du causatif, ne s'oppose pas à lui; il est pensé comme une substance inséparable d'une qualification du causatif." (Moignet 1973: 369).

is less and less "sortant" and more and more "sorti".[18]

Illustration:



(from Moignet 1973:369).

Verbal tension in this type of verb is therefore internal, since it cannot leave the syntactically linked pair of subject/verb.

As a consequence, the transition between immanent time and transcendent time is simultaneous with complete loss of activity on the part of the subject. In verbs with a limit of tension not directed towards the subject, the temporal accompli, or perfectivity, of the action does not necessarily coincide with its notional perfectivity. The verb in:

(3) Pierre a marché.

denotes a process which instead of being completed, may only be interrupted, and which may be taken up again immediately without the obligation of beginning the process again. (Wilmet 1972: 52). But at the very moment when the process represented by:

(4) Pierre sort.

assumes the transcendent aspect, then the activity is

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[18] "A mesure que déroule le procès 'sort', le sujet est de moins en moins sortant et de plus en plus sorti. Pierre sort indique une sortie qui ne peut se concevoir qu'étroitement associée à la personne du sujet." (Moignet 1973: 369).

effectively finished and cannot be extended, but only repeated.[19] The verb once in extension reaches the end of its operation, and the result transforms itself into a state. It is Pierre who is sorti, that is in the state of being sorti, and this state is consequent on crossing the limit of verbal tension. Pierre's activity in immanent time thus changes into passivity in transcendent time,[20] the subject having imposed on him the state resulting from his action.[21]

For the particular type of middle diathesis represented by 'sortir'-type verbs then avoir is inappropriate as an auxiliary. Since sortir changes in time from an active verb to a passive verb combining the two notions in one sémantèse, it presents a synthesis of voices with the effective incidence fusing with the causative incidence. Guillaume points out that wherever verbal voice is synthetic in French, presenting both activity and passivity, être is the auxiliary to be used, avoir being suitable only for analytic voices signalling the "clear separation in thought of cause and effect". (Moignet 1973: 370 tr.). Even though sortir is primarily an active voice verb, a change in aspect entails the passivity

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[19] "Le 'résultatif' est la voix propre aux verbes qui aboutissent à un état résultant et qui, une fois accomplis, ne peuvent être que repétés et non pas prolongés...." (Martin 1971: 64).

[20] In speaking of the compound aspect of 'sortir'-type verbs, Moignet notes "...l'extinction de toute activité en détension." (Moignet 1965: 136).

[21] "Le sujet 'actif' dans il sort voit s'imposer à lui, de par le sémantisme du verbe, l'état consécutif à son acte." (Stéfanini 1971: 111).

of the subject.[22] In the transcendent aspect it is not quite fully passive in the sense that a passive periphrastic construction is, despite the parallelism observed by Martin (1963) between sortir etc. and stative passives ("passifs d'état"). Neither, he notes, undergoes any action; both represent fully completed actions which cannot be prolonged but only repeated; and no agentive complement is possible with either. (Martin 1963: 35 tr.). But while these observations are sufficient to prompt Martin into establishing a voix mixte to embrace both types of constructions, such a voice serving to express a "subject in the state resulting from his action,"[23] he fails to give enough attention to the feature peculiar to the 'sortir'-type sémantèse which accounts for these similarities in form when sortir transcends immanent time. What marks a sortir-construction is its middle diathesis: the same subject is both active and passive, albeit at different times. But there is no question of the subject of a stative passive performing activity at any time, of becoming passive as a result of its own activity. Pierre est sorti presupposes the previous action Pierre sort, but le château est restauré in no way presupposes *Le château restaure. Resultatives are similar in form to stative passives only at a certain time in the unfolding of verbal tension, and

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[22] "En effet, la position dominante est restée celle de la voix active, mais sous cette position s'introduit, avec le changement d'aspect, le passif." (Guillaume UL, 28 March and 4 April 1946: 321).

[23] "'voix mixte': le sujet se trouve dans l'état qui découle de l'action." (Martin 1963: 36).

cannot be said to share the same voice with other forms unless all the forms share the same characteristics all the time.

However, the fact that sortir and verbs like it have an internal limit of tension is enough to make them passive in the extensive aspect, and to require être as auxiliary. Molho notes that any verb including an image of the limit of its operation within itself is passive, and that when this limit is crossed, the auxiliary needed is être.[24] For the choice of auxiliary of any verb is made on the basis of its notional status in extension, not on the verb itself.[25] And since sortir-type verbs enter their subsequent phase passively, être is the only auxiliary possible.

These verbs are descendants of the Latin deponents, not so much formally as notionally. The class of verbs like morior and nascor, roots of the resultative verbs mourir and naître, has been expanded in French to include sémantèmes of similar semantic nature (like tomber, partir, entrer, sortir, etc.), capable of establishing a link between subject and result.[26] The essential feature distinguishing these

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[24] "...entrer et sortir doivent se conjuguer passivement à l'aspect extensif, c'est-à-dire sitôt que ladite limite se trouve atteinte en pensée et franchie." (Molho 1965: 195).

[25] "L'auxiliaire adopté est, dans tous les cas, vu qu'il s'agit de l'aspect composé, extensif et transcendant, celui qu'appelle la phase d'extension du verbe, la phase qui porte l'expression non pas de lui-même, mais de sa subséquence. C'est la subséquence du verbe, non pas le verbe lui-même, qui décide de l'auxiliaire."(Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 387).

[26] This branch of middle voice is "issue du statu quo ante des déponents défectifs latins du type morior (actif) + mortuus sum (passif) et élargie ensuite psychologiquement autant qu'il

(...continued)

intransitives from all others is that they refuse to be in the compound aspect before they are notionally perfective.[27] One cannot say:

(5) Je suis sorti

"while one is going out; one must wait until the moment when the 'going out', having been accomplished completely, imposes on the subject the passive situation which it constitutes." (Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 397 tr.). Thus it is the semantic nature of this type of verb which imposes on the subject its moment of transition to the compound aspect, in contrast to non-resultative intransitives whose subjects impose on the verb this final moment which they can freely choose.[28]

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se pouvait dans le français même." (Guillaume 1969: 141) and "ils perpétuent une ancienne voix de synthèse, moyenne ou mixte, issue du déponent latin (morior, nascor, etc.), grossie en français des sémantèmes comportant un psychisme identique (sortir, disparaître, partir, tomber, entrer, etc.), en l'occurrence la faculté d'instaurer une relation sujet/verbe ...." (Wilmet 1972: 52).

[27] La déponence se produit avec les verbes qui...refusent l'aspect composé aussi longtemps qu'ils ne sont pas idéellement, notionnellement, accomplis." (Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 397). De Kock makes exactly the same observation in stating: "La tendance à interpréter de certains régisseurs intransitifs comme le patient du procès et non comme son agent, va de pair avec une propension à interpréter comme accompli le procès exprimé par ces régisseurs si aucune précision ne contredit cet accomplissement ou ne signale que le procès est en cours d'accomplissement au moment considéré." (De Kock 1969: 37).

[28] "Ainsi dans les verbes à parfait intégrant, c'est le verbe qui détient et impose au sujet, passif à ce point de vue, l'instant d'accession à l'aspect composé. Dans les verbes à parfait dirimant, c'est le sujet qui impose au verbe cet instant terminal qu'il a le pouvoir de choisir à son gré. L'activité, quant au choix de cet instant critique, a changé de camp: elle était du côté du verbe; elle est passé du côté du sujet." (Guillaume 1969: 132).

In order to qualify as a French deponent, the verb must show disharmony ("désaccord") between the tensive phase of the verb and its extensive phase, in the sense that the auxiliary avoir which would seem to be required by the tensive, active phase is rejected because of the semantic nature of the sémantèse in extension. The disharmony is of course not a feature of all verbs. Since transitivity, which makes a verb reversible from active to passive, tends to make the past participle indifferent to voice (Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 396), the risk of disharmony in transitive verbs is almost non-existent. An intransitive verb however does not automatically make its past participle indifferent to voice. There is therefore a possibility of disharmony between tensive and extensive phases of intransitive verbs, signalled by the combination within the past participle of temporal and notional perfectivity.

When this combination is regular and systematic in a particular verb, Guillaume calls it an 'absolute deponent' or déponent d'état, but when a verb can be analyzed into separate components of temporal perfectivity and notional imperfectivity, on certain occasions but not others, then the deponency is contextual (a déponent de traitement). A verb like partir is an absolute deponent. The completed activity of partir can never be seen as an interrupted process able to be resumed in mid-stream. Whereas in:

(6) j'ai marché,

nothing prevents me from taking up my walking without being

obliged to start again from the beginning, in:

(7) je suis parti,

the process is necessarily completed, and I cannot carry on leaving. Once I have left, I have no recourse but to repeat the process from the very beginning.[29] The intransitive monter, however, can be used in contexts which do not demand tensive/extensive disharmony. Guillaume points out that someone in the process of climbing a long series of stairs may pause, out of breath, at a landing, and offer as an explanation of his fatigue:

(8) C'est que j'ai monté (Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 391).

Here the context imposes the possibility of continuing the process which is notionally imperfective. Intransitivity here has not imposed tensive/extensive disharmony.

(9) "Nous avons assez monté, descendons à présent." (Montesquieu). The action here is temporally complete but materially incomplete because the climb, the goal which the climbers had set themselves prior to starting off, has not been reached. Fatigue has imposed an early descent, and so the act of climbing, while temporally finished, has been suspended before its material completion.

The number of these absolute and contextual deponents in French is far higher than the traditional sixteen or so "verbs of motion" (like rester!) of school grammars. De Kock presents a list of fifty-seven verbs known to have been conjugated

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[29] "Je pars: je suis parti; c'est chose faite: je ne puis dans le subséquent immédiat partir." (Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 388).

with être in the transcendant aspect.[30] However, since he sees the role of the auxiliary to be either the expression of transcendence of immanent time (avoir) or the expression of patient as subject (être), he feels that the use of être to express anterior time with these verbs is nothing more than an empty grammatical rule obscuring the true role of the auxiliary.[31] But the real reason why être can be found as the auxiliary of such verbs is that, in a given context, temporal and notional perfectivity may coincide to the extent that the activity cannot be completed temporally before it is completed notionally. In cases where être is found as auxiliary of intransitive verbs in unfamiliar circumstances, the explanation for its use will be found in this combination,[32] whose consequence is the passivity of the subject when immanent time is transcended.

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[30] "aboutir, accourir, accoucher, advenir, aller, apparaître, arriver, baisser, blanchir, bondir, broncher, changer, choir, coller, convenir, coucher, courir, crever, croître, décéder, découler, débarquer, dégringoler, demeurer, descendre, devenir, échapper, échoir, émaner, emménager, entrer, expirer, jaillir, maigrir, marcher, monter, naître, paraître, partir, parvenir, passer, pénétrer, périr, ressusciter, rester, retourner, réussir, sauter, sombrer, sortir, survenir, tomber, tourner, trépasser, venir, vivre, voler."(De Kock 1969: 42). The list furnished by Grevisse is even longer.

[31] "Le recours à être étant devenu une servitude grammaticale, la règle a probablement contribué à estomper chez beaucoup la portée conceptuelle, quelle qu'elle soit, du choix de l'auxiliaire." (De Kock 1969: 42).

[32] "La distinction des deux sommations (temporelle et notionnelle) est le meilleur discriminant dont on puisse faire usage, quand il s'agit d'examiner les cas délicats d'emploi de l'auxiliaire, ceux qui font l'objet de commentaires abondants dans les ouvrages qui s'intéressent aux nuances stylistiques." (Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 398).

In a series of examples using both transitive and intransitive verbs, Guillaume (UL, 8 May 1941: 398-404) illustrates how this particular case of middle voice operates. He begins by showing that the fusion of temporal and notional accompli is not the sole criterion for deponency, since finir - j'ai fini - uses avoir as auxiliary despite the fact that one is finished notionally and temporally at the same time. This is because finir is a transitive verb, and because transitivity in French never imposes a necessary disharmony between tension and extension on a verb, since the past participle is indifferent to voice. Thus, when sortir is used transitively and externalizes its resultative incidence onto an effective support, as in J'ai sorti mon mouchoir, the auxiliary is avoir. This is not to say though that disharmony cannot exist between transitive verb and auxiliary, simply that it is not obligatory.[33] Only with intransitivity is possible disharmony imposed. Thus, there are instances of the use of être with transitives, such as:

(10) A votre place je serais foutu le camp (ibid: 401)

What prompts the use of être is the notional equivalence of "foutre le camp" to "partir", Guillaume believes that the underlying influence of partir here calls up the auxiliary which would be required had partir been produced on the surface. It is in fact a tenet of his theory of auxiliaries that "human thought tends to see in a given verb the equivalent

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33 "La transitivité n'empêche pas le déponent de se produire, mais elle suffit à ce qu'il ne soit pas quelque chose d'obligé." (Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 400).

of another verb present in the mind, and to adopt, therefore, the auxiliary which this underlying verb would have had if this verb had been explicitly produced." (ibid: 401 tr.). From Racine (Frères Ennemis) comes the example:

(11) J'y suis couru en vain; c'en était déjà fait

where what is said is y couru and what is thought is venu (ibid: 402). Guillaume says that he has overheard:

(12) Je suis marché jusque-là,

a sentence in which an underlying aller had evoked être as auxiliary. These cases clearly illustrate the strength of the middle diathesis in French: the perception of subject as patient is enough to produce perturbations in the active morphology of the verb. The forms seem to be made to reflect the diathesis.

It is interesting to take note of the semantic nuances associated with a verb which can be found conjugated with either être or avoir. Observing first of all that avoir is used to denote action, while être is used to denote a state, G. & R. Le Bidois note that those verbs, like grandir, échouer, etc., which can be found with both auxiliaries, are for the most part verbs expressing a change of state. As such, the past participle of these verbs expresses the state resulting from the change. But since this change is itself an action, the participle can be considered from two viewpoints: as a state or as an action, each with the appropriate auxiliary. (Le Bidois 1968: 418). Does this explanation account for the variation:

(13a) J'ai abouti à ce beau résultat. and:

(13b) Je suis abouti à ce beau résultat?

Only if the vague notion of a "change of state" verb can be satisfactorily defined. In what sense does 'aboutir' express a change of state? It would seem rather to express the end of an activity with no indication of further change. The best way to account for the variation is to see that, when avoir is used, despite the fact that it seems impossible to continue to "aboutir" once finished, without having to start all over again, the finishing point is usually subjective and not imposed on the subject by the semantic content of the verb itself, as is the case with sortir.[34] The subject is therefore an agent when the verb is in extension, being free to choose when the action is to finish. If, however, the subject is considered to be bound by events so that the finishing point is not determined by him but is one to which he is brought without acting consciously to get there, être is the suitable auxiliary. Thus (b) would be appropriate to express the idea that the result arrived at is undesirable but unavoidable, while (a) is better where the result is one deliberately aimed for.[35]

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[34] "Le résultat que je considère un aboutissement, c'est moi qui le détermine. Le point qui marque la sortie d'un lieu est un point dont la fixation, purement objective, ne m'appartient pas. Le point de sortie est là où il est." (Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 399-400).

[35] "'Je suis abouti à ce beau résultat' convient bien pour signifier l'arrivée à un résultat non souhaité. Inversement, l'auxiliaire avoir prend à son tour l'avantage quand il s'agit d'un aboutissement délibérément visé." (Guillaume UL, 8 May 1941: 400).

Whereas with aboutir the participation in middle voice is a question of loss of freedom on the part of the subject to determine the temporal finishing point of the process, it is the amount of time available to the subject in the completion of the process which determines the middle voice status of verbs indicating dying in French. In the case of mourir, the amount of time marking the passage from life to death is instantaneous, infinitely short - virtually nil. There is no time conceivable to separate the temporal perfectivity from the notional perfectivity of the process, and so the two are linked so closely as to be identical, dependent one on the other. (ibid: 402-403). Mourir is therefore an absolute deponent. Périr, on the other hand, is the more or less prolonged drama of death, which can range from being finitely short to infinitely long, thus providing the distance necessary to separate the temporal and notional accompli, as well as ensuring their combination if desired. Therefore, périr can be found with both auxiliaries, depending on the value given to the time between temporal and notional perfectivity. Compare:

(14) "Si au moment de la vente la chose était périe en totalité, la vente serait nulle." (Du code Napoléon)

with:

(15) "Le nom de mon époux a donc péri par vous" (Voltaire)

(Examples from ibid: 403).

Guillaume makes the difference between the two verbs explicit when he says: "Mourir expresses an abstract moment without

duration. Périr expresses a real moment with duration. This question of positive duration of the process is also the basis for the distinction of avoir (ap)paru and être (ap)paru ....There is a tendency in the language to use être in cases where one wants to emphasize the sudden nature of the event." (Guillaume UL, May 8 1941: 403-404 tr.). Thus:

(16) "Un homme est paru au balcon" (ibid: 404)

expresses the unexpected nature of the action in contrast to the more normal:

(17) Un homme a paru au balcon.

The first example denotes suddenness because the subject is not represented as having done anything: the verb expresses an immediate result, a consequence without condition. The second represents a subject as having done something which consequently led to a result.

To sum up, then, one can say that 'resultative' verbs are a special case of middle diathesis. Instead of presenting a subject as simultaneously embodying portions of activity and passivity, resultatives combine in the same sémantèse a causal support which creates for itself a state of passivity as a result of its own activity. The time taken to proceed from role of agent to that of patient of the process is instantaneous; consequently the subject does not have associated with it any of the intermediate values which can be assumed by a fully middle subject.

Examples of verbs normally conjugated with avoir, but which in certain contexts are conjugated with être, illustrate

the nature of resultatives. (Examples from the Dictionnaire Robert).

(18) Il est maigri depuis quinze jours, autant que vous n'avez que la peau et les os..." (Balzac)

The effect of the action of 'growing thin' has been so drastic that the very essence of the subject is now 'thinness', and he is considered to be in a state of 'being thin' as a result of the notional completion of the process.

(19) "Il m'est echappé de la tutoyer en public"

Echapper is quite regularly used with être when it signifies something happening without normal conscious control;[36] that is, when the subject is more patient of the process than agent, and is considered to be in the state resulting from his own activity.

(20) "Je suis vite accouru" (La Fontaine)

The verb indicates directed activity. The fact that it is conjugated with être means that the goal has been reached, and that there is therefore a combination of temporal and notional perfectivity indicated by the verb.

(21) "Il était arrivé au vieil absent...diverses choses dont la principale était qu'il était trépassé." (Hugo).

In this sentence, the verb indicating dying and death uses être. The verb represents the subject without reference to the on-going action of dying. The consequence is presented without the necessary condition, and so the subject is seen to be in the state resulting from his actions, in a position of complete passivity.

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[36] Echapper takes être "quand il s'applique à ce qu'on dit, à ce qu'on fait, par imprudence, par mégarde, etc." (Grevisse 1964: 606).

Here are some other examples of the same phenomenon:

(22) "Il la revit telle qu'elle lui était apparue un matin". (Daudet)

(23) "Il était demeuré là jusqu'à la nuit noire" (Bourget)

(24) "Il est passé au contrôle des douanes."

(25) "Jesus est ressuscité comme il l'avait dit." (La Bible).

The feature common to all of these examples is that the process indicated by the verb is considered to be at the same time both temporally and notionally (or materially) complete.

Pronominal voice: Its aptness for middle diathesis

It is the pronominal construction which most ideally provides the form for expression of middle diathesis in French. What distinguishes this construction morphologically from other verbs is the presence of a variable pronoun which refers to the subject of the verb.[37] This reflexive pronoun, so called because of its function of repeating the subject in a different form, is the single most important feature making the pronominal apt for the expression of middle diathesis. For if a form is to show a subject as both agent and patient

[37] Damourette and Pichon describe this variable pronoun in somewhat more precise terms in their discussion of 'reflexive voice'. "La voix réflexive est une voix dans laquelle figure un partenaire appelé reflet, qui est consubstantiel avec l'agent du phénomène verbal." (Damourette and Pichon:696).

of his actions, then what better arrangement than to evoke the subject twice, first with a subject pronoun or a noun, second with a pronoun which, except for the third person, is normally confined to the expression of the object of a verb (i.e. me, te, se, nous, vous). It would seem to be an eminently straight-forward solution to a problem of semiology: a subject simultaneously agent and patient, is grammaticalized as an object after being mentioned as subject. (Semiology is understood here in its Saussurean sense. It is more abstract than Guillaume's system of signs and phonologic and morphemic apparatus, and is intended to mean 'the conveying of a message' without any necessary reference to how the message is to be conveyed.) And since there is no constraint on the degree of activity or passivity which can be associated with subjects and objects, the construction seems perfectly suited to convey the variable ratio of agent to patient demanded by different contexts and situations. It would appear logical to associate the agent role with the subject and the patient role with the reflexive pronoun, in such a way that the middle voice formula be understood to read:

Logical subject = agent + patient = noun/pronoun subject form + reflexive pronoun = 1.

Such a solution, however, proves too convenient to be real. If the reflexive pronoun were considered as an object, then in the sentences:

(26a) je me lave and (26b) je le lave,

the notional status of me would be equivaleht to that of le. The limit of verbal tension, that on which a verb predicates

its activity, would in both cases have to be considered external. Effective incidence, in a sémantèse which exteriorizes its limit of tension, goes to an external support which is not the causative support, and the fact that the two incidences are separate is signalled by the use of avoir as auxiliary in the transcendent aspect. (Moignet 1973: 370).

But while je le lave becomes je l'ai lavé, the regular standard extensive form of je me lave is je me suis lavé. It is obvious then that the status of the object-form pronouns is far from the same, and that there is something about the combination of je and me which prevents avoir from being the auxiliary of the compound aspect of pronominal verbs. The idea that a reflexive verb is one whose subject performs an exterior action upon himself must be modified to account for the use of être. The verbal limit of tension must be internal; effective incidence and causative incidence must both go to the same support, and that support, despite its dual form, must be considered to be one. Je and me must together express the notion of combined agent and patient, and thus unified can serve as support for a sémantèse with internal limit of tension. It is the internal limit of tension which makes être the appropriate auxiliary to mark anterior time.

De Kock considers that avoir is the natural choice of auxiliary to express time, with être confined to expressing a subject which is a patient, and sees, therefore, the use of être to express anteriority with pronominals as incoherent.

And the conclusion he draws from this apparent incoherence is that French gives priority to the system of expressing the participants in a process, with second place accorded to the chronological system. (De Kock 1969: 34). He need not have drawn such a conclusion, nor seen any incoherence. The facts of the case are that the subject is in a state resulting from his action, which naturally demands expression using être, but also that this state is necessarily subsequent to any action which has been performed. To be in such and such a state (with pronominal and resultative verbs) presupposes action which has already happened, and so the expression of anteriority is concomitant with the expression of a state.

The role of me in je me lave, and throughout the conjugation, must be something other than that of "designating a substance situated in universe-space". (Stéfanini 1962: 97-tr.). Its real purpose must be to indicate the subject's constant awareness of his own passivity in the process which he performs, without the notion of passivity being inextricably associated with the notion of object. For if je me lave can be conceived as *je lave moi, with moi obviously object of the verb whose agent is je, then the transcendent aspect of the same sentence can in no way be similarly interpreted. In je me suis lavé, the passive element is je, because je is the one who is lavé: je suis lavé. The paradox is that me here expresses the activity of the subject, thus reversing the apparent function of the reflexive particle. However, in

a sentence like:

(27) Je me suis dit la même chose,

je cannot be conceived of as the passive element; nor can me. But together they constitute a subject whose activity implies that he undergoes the effects of his action.[38]

It is here that the similarity between the pronominal construction and that other component of middle voice, resultative verbs, is most striking. Just as the subject of a resultative sémantèse starts actively and ends passively, so does the subject of a pronominal. The difference is in the degree of activity and passivity present in immanent time and transcendent time respectively. A resultative subject is totally agent, and then totally patient of his action; a pronominal subject is always agent and patient, but the distribution of weight of activity and passivity shifts abruptly as the verb changes in aspect. Stéfanini makes the following observation in this regard: "From the tensive to the extensive aspect, the roles are reversed: in the first, the verbal form denotes the activity of the subject, and the reflexive pronoun its passivity. In the second, with all activity stopped, the verbal form marks only the state resulting from the previous action. At this point, the memory of previous action is preserved thanks to the reflexive pronoun."

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[38] Le pronom "qui signale la passivité du sujet à l'aspect immanent du verbe, le sujet étant actif (je me lave = je lave), signale au contraire son activité, au moins à l'état de permanence mémorielle, à l'aspect transcendent, le sujet étant passif (je me suis lavé = je suis lavé)." (Moignet 1965: 136). Also, "une analyse fine du pronominal révèle que le procès commence activement et finit passivement." (Martin 1971:66).

(Stéfanini 1962: 683 tr.). The reflexive pronoun cannot then be equated with an object, but must be seen as part of a complex two-part subject which is both active and passive. The pronoun is not a subject in form, but signifies what the formal subject pronoun does not signify. And whether this subject pronoun is active or passive is decided, as with all verbs having an internal limit of tension, by the aspect of the verb.[39] The principal role of the pronoun is to express identity, not transitivity; the object function is subordinate to the subject function.

Guillaume's thoughts on this question of the status of the subject components of pronominal verbs seem to have changed over time. In his unpublished paper Linguistique psychique, esquisse d'une étude des voix (undated), he remarks that in the pronominal construction, "the representation of the active being is made through the use of a noun or a pronoun; that of the passive being through the use of a special morpheme variable with the person." (Guillaume, Ling. Psy.: 8 tr.). But in a lecture given on the 21st of March 1946, he recognizes that the subject of a pronominal construction is represented in a way which is complex and variable, and not always subject to analysis, whether on the basis of form or of notional status. "The real characteristic of pronominal verbs, and common to all of them, is to relate the verb, not to the subject alone, but to a complex subject/

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[39] "Au vrai, ce que sera le terme en forme ou en position du sujet, actif ou passif, ne se détermine que secondairement par l'aspect du procès énoncé ensuite." (Moignet 1965: 136).

reflexive pronoun relationship, which can be, from a conceptual point of view, susceptible to analysis or impervious to it. In the first case of susceptibility to analysis, the subject clearly represents the agent and the reflexive pronoun the patient. In the second case, which resists analysis, the subject and the reflexive pronoun have in common an ambiguous agent/patient function, of which they are not the analytic components. This function does not lose its ambiguity....The two roles, of a being acted upon, and of an acting being, through the effect of an alliance which is in the nature of a mixture, are not separated." (Guillaume UL, 21 March 1946: 312-313 tr.).

The ability of the subject of a reflexive verb to be represented as both agent and patient of the same process means that the pronominal construction has wide powers of synthesis and can express a range of voice values. The only restriction on the twice-mentioned subject is that it represent simultaneously activity and passivity. Stéfanini remarks that: "in tongue, a pronominal is always middle; it always expresses action and 'passion'. In discourse it can assume a reflexive sense (that is, one which emphasizes the activity of the subject), a passive sense, or, on the other hand, a sense which is active or passive in equal proportions." (Stéfanini 1962: 115 tr.). For Guillaume, the pronominal expresses a range of values because "it refers to one and the same verb the two opposing functions of subject who is acting and subject who is acted upon, between which the verb can

then be distributed in any proportion whatsoever." (Guillaume 1969: 141 tr.).

That the pronominal sémantèse can assume such a variety of values then is due to the proportional relation of strength of the causative and effective incidences which the subject supports. Both incidences are always present in a pronominal verb. Where they can be analysed as separate and of equal weight, that is, where the idea is quite clearly that of a subject performing an action on himself, then the subject is considered active. Since the action is performed by the subject on the subject, the value of the construction is said to be reflexive with an agent-subject performing an action on a patient-subject.

Where the two incidences become fused in one person and cannot be analysed into separate components, the subject is middle, in the narrow sense of middle discussed earlier. The incidences here are so mingled as to express an agent-subject undergoing the effect of something which has had its source in him. This subject suffers the consequences of some act which he, as agent, is responsible for. In this case of middle voice, the share of activity and passivity of each incidence is not discernable, and there are many possible proportions which can be attributed to the combination, depending of course on the situation which is being expressed.

Where the active incidence is minimized to such an extent that the activity of the subject can no longer be recognized and for all practical purposes has ceased to be

perceptible, then the value of the pronominal is passive.[40] Molho explains how the passive value of the reflexive comes to be expressed: "By virtue of its composition, the pronominal is capable of producing meanings ("effets de sens") which are as close as one would or could imagine to being passive. All that is necessary is to maximize the patient to the detriment of the agent, whose minimized importance will tend towards zero. One will then have an agent/patient subject which effectively is only a patient." (Molho 1965: 197 tr.).[41]

As an illustration of the multiple values which a reflexive construction can have, consider the sémantèse 'battre' treated pronominally. The active reflexive sense is conveyed by

(28) Étant masochiste, Jean s'est battu pour le plaisir.

Here, the idea is obviously that Jean is performing an action

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[40] "La voix réfléchie se laisse concevoir transitive et active, là où le sujet agissant est perçu agir sciemment, délibérément sur lui-même....Les deux incidences, quoique, en fait, référés à la même personne, se séparent bien.

La même voix réfléchie se fait concevoir moyenne là où le sujet apparaît éprouver, et en quelque sorte subir, quelque chose dont il n'a pas l'entière conduction, quelque chose au sein de quoi il se présente dominé plutôt que dominant, sans séparation nette des deux conditions.

Enfin la voix réfléchie se fait concevoir passive là où on annule en elle, ou presque, l'incidence active A, ne laissant subsister sensiblement que l'incidence passive B."" (Guillaume 1971(B): 182).

[41] Compare the statement by Stéfanini: "...le verbe pronominal devient un passif, quand l'attention se concentre sur le côté subi du procès, quand des deux valeurs qui composent la forme, l'une tend vers zéro et l'autre vers son maximum." (Stéfanini 1962: 629).

on himself.

An extended reflexive sense is possible in:

(29) Jean et Pierre se sont battus à coups de poing.

What is conveyed here is the idea that Jean beat Pierre, and Pierre beat Jean. Each member of a plural subject performed the action on each other member of that subject. This plural reflexive sense, whereby at one moment member A is agent while member B is patient, while at the next the status of A changes to patient, and B changes to agent, and so on, is called reciprocal. (Of course, the sentence can be interpreted as meaning Jean beat himself, and Pierre beat himself, with no interaction at all. In this case the value of the verb is reflexive).

The verb has an unanalysable middle sense in:

(30) Il se bat contre l'ennemi avec toutes ses forces.

The idea is that the subject is agent in dealing blows to the enemy, but also that he is patient because the nature of the activity is such that he receives blows as well.

A passive sense is evident in:

(31) Les cartes se battent avant chaque donne.

The cards cannot be imagined as shuffling themselves; they are not agents of the process which they undergo. As logical subject only (the dynamic subject is not mentioned), they are patient, and the sense of the verb is passive. Since the passive use of the pronominal presupposes the suppression of the agency of the subject, it is natural to expect that this subject will not be animate. De Kock,

observing that there is "no formal or syntactic marker indicating if the subject's role is that of patient only, or that of agent and patient," says that "the interpretation seems to depend on whether the subject belongs to the semantic category of animate or inanimate. . . .Whereas the sentence:

Les enfants se lavent.

is understood as les enfants sont lavés par eux-mêmes, or as les enfants sont lavés les uns par les autres, the following sentence

Les assiettes se lavent.

can be transformed only into les assiettes sont lavées." (De Kock 1969: 29 tr.). The first sentence is reflexive or reciprocal (or possibly passive); the second is passive only. However, this observation is nothing more than a generalization admitting of many exceptions; many animate subjects are subjects of passive pronominal constructions, without being treated as inanimate.

cf. (32) Tout professionnel se paye dans l'exercice de ses fonctions.

(33) Une nourrice se traitait beaucoup mieux qu'un tacheron.

(Examples from Stéfanini 1971: 122).

In their investigation of the pronominal construction, Damourette and Pichon indicate that they consider this construction to constitute a voice. Since the question of voice is one which concerns the incidence of immanent time to the subject (Stéfanini 1971: 111), one would expect that the criterion used by Damourette and Pichon in determining what constitutes boundaries of voice categories would be the

form assumed by the verb in the transcendence of immanent time. And it is in fact the auxiliary of pronominals which serves as their criterion: "It is the introduction of the verb être into the anterior tenses of il se venge (il s'est vengé, s'était vengé) which imparts to this conjugation the nature of a specialized verbal voice." (Damourette and Pichon: 710 tr.). They also indicate that, despite the diversity of semantic values which are attached to pronominal forms, the coherent morphology provides the unity necessary for establishing the category of reflexive voice. (ibid. 698).[42] Without using the term of middle voice, they nonetheless reveal their awareness of the underlying structure of middle diathesis.

The pronominal construction whose subject is primarily active is called "réflexo-respectif". In this usage, "there is consubstantiality between the reflexive pronoun and the grammatical agent which is in a certain sense material so that each unit can be conceived of separately." (ibid: 698 tr.). The usage which permits a passive interpretation is called "réflexo-réversif". They call the process 'reversible' because "the subject has no real role as a conscious individual agent," and the construction is therefore apt "to express processes in which the agent has no conscious will to become a reflect." (ibid: 702 tr.). In this way, "at the limit, the reflexive voice is able to express shades of meaning

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42 A point echoed by Molho when he says: "La sémiologie unitaire de la diathèse moyenne confirme l'unité de représentation qu'elle constitue...." (Molho 1965: 192).

which are very close to those of the passive." (ibid: 702 tr.).

But instead of considering reciprocal uses of the pronominal as part of the wider category of reflexives, they establish a separate category for reciprocity, using as their criterion the possibility of attaching to a particular verbal group the analytic reciprocity marker 'l'un l'autre' or 'les uns les autres', whose elements may or may not be joined by a preposition, as in 'l'un contre l'autre'. And, more seriously, they establish a category called "réflexo-mutuel" which is perhaps linguistically unjustifiable. This category is to cover those pronominal constructions which, instead of expressing the fact that the subject performs a direct action on himself, expresses the idea that "the agent has the effect of his action 'fall back' ('retomber') on him." (ibid: 699 tr.). The example they use is:

(34) Je me croirai à la porte avec cet homme à la barbe assyrienne (ibid: 699).

and in their commentary they make the observation that "the essence of the meeting is that the bearded man passed M. Pigeonneau (the speaker) in the same process as M. Pigeonneau passed the bearded man." (ibid: 699 tr.). But since the sentence is centred on the subject je, "it is M. Pigeonneau who is considered to be undergoing his own action in a mediated way, which 'falls back' on him after its reflection on the mediator, this man with the Assyrian beard." (ibid: 699 tr.).

What this category supposes then is a sort of reciprocal

process, centred on a single active subject but assuming the necessary passive involvement of another participant in the process. But if this participant is not a member of the syntactically linked pair of subject + verb, then there is nothing to indicate what his role is in the process. Any assumption made about his presence may be sound from a logical point of view, but from a grammatical one, the only justifiable interpretation is that the subject is simultaneously agent and patient of the event. The probable reason for the use of the pronominal in this sentence instead of the active is that the author wished "to emphasize the passive aspect which the process had for the speaker; for example the fact that the encounter could give rise to an exchange of pleasantries, both given and received." (Stéfanini 1962: 111 tr.). Similarly, the sentence:

(35) Il se bat contre l'ennemi avec toutes ses forces.

does not permit any sort of reciprocal interpretation. It is logical to suppose an enemy with whom the subject is trading blows, but the text (il se bat) expresses only the subject who is both agent and patient of the process.[43] This type of sentence must be considered a narrow-definition middle, with the subject combining the functions of agent

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43 "....'il se bat' indiquant qu'un combattant donne et reçoit des coups nous paraît un moyen (stricto sensu). C'est du moins la seule classification linguistiquement possible, la seule qui ne fasse pas intervenir des critères extra-linguistiques. Mentionner un adversaire qui lui rend ses coups et reçoit les siens, c'est faire preuve d'une logique irréprochable, mais c'est aussi faire dire au texte ce qu'elle n'exprime pas." (Stéfanini 1962: 112).

and patient. The presence of an outside mediator in the event cannot be a factor in a grammatical analysis of the verb.

It is also wrong to suggest that the action in such a construction 'falls back' on the subject, since this implies that the action has left the sphere of the subject to be reflected back on him in some way. The fact is that the reflexive pronouns are tightly linked to the verb even before the semantic nature of the verb is known, and prevent any interpretation not taking into account the constant identity of agent and patient.[44]

Because of its wide range of values and the characteristics of its morphology, i.e. the presence of a reflexive pronoun and the use of être to express anteriority, the pronominal construction is apt to express middle diathesis and should be considered as the most important constituent of middle voice in French. Not only does this middle voice "bring together what is distinguished in other voices, but it also maintains an equilibrium of usage. It retains the reflexive forms which the active would tend to incorporate. It has not, as in some other languages, been transformed into a simple means of expressing the passive. And finally, it has maintained within itself the category of middle in the narrow sense of the term, that is, a category which

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[44] "L'emploi des formes atones...pour marquer seulement la fonction régime, et qui...s'unissent étroitement au verbe pour en fixer la limite intérieure de tension, avant même qu'en soit connu le sémantisme, empêche, en quelque sorte, de perdre de vue l'identité de l'agent et du patient." (Stéfanini 1962: 253).

permits a more finely nuanced analysis of a certain number of processes....It also spares the necessity in a majority of cases for a special form expressing reciprocal notions." (Stéfanini 1962: 127 tr.). The simultaneous presence of activity and passivity in the subject of a pronominal, in contrast to their clearly separated presence in resultatives, ensures the full expression of all the possibilities of middle diathesis.[45]

Transitivity of Pronominals

Investigation of the transitivity of pronominal verbs reveals a situation which is not systematic for all verbs. There are many degrees of fusion established by the pronominal verb with both internal elements of the verb and elements outside of it. The principal transitivity relation is internal, the relation between the verb and the reflexive pronoun. Blinkenberg's view that an indirect object falls within the scope of transitivity and does not lie outside the reach of the verb in some area of intransitivity is partially supported by the fact that the reflexive

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[45] A summary of the aptness of the pronominal to express middle diathesis is given by Moignet. "On sait en quoi consiste la voix pronominale du français. Avec les verbes pluripersonnels, la répétition de la personne sujet sous sa forme de régime permet de signifier que l'activité de support est contaminée de passivité, en sorte que partie ou même totalité de la conduction de l'événement signifié par le verbe lui est retirée. Le support est ainsi déclaré passif en même temps qu'actif à l'égard du comportement en cause; à la limite, la passivité est seule régnante." (Moignet 1971: 275-276).

pronouns have only one form, whether the verb demand a direct or an indirect object.[46] The following active verbs, treated pronominally, give reflexive pronouns which are formally identical despite different underlying structures:

laver quelqu'un ⟶ se laver

donner quelque chose à quelqu'un ⟶ se donner quelque chose

The origin of this lack of distinction between transitive and intransitive objects was a major contribution to the development of the pronominal voice in French. It began with "the confusion of the accusative and dative forms in the personal pronoun in Latin. From that point on, an object case could indicate a subject in the position of a patient, without distinguishing direct or indirect transitivity..." (Stéfanini 1962: 215 tr.).[47]

According to Molho, this converging of forms is necessary for the establishment of middle voice, since outside of middle voice, the undergoing of a given process may be expressed with or without the mediation of a preposition. He says that "middle voice is only possible insofar as the

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[46] Of course, four of these pronouns also express first and second person direct and indirect objects elsewhere than conjoined to a reflexive subject.

[47] The other major factor in the rise of pronominal voice was the new agreement of the attribute in phrases like 'se dicit(esse) bonus'. Whereas previously the adjective would have been accusative, the new nominative form shows that reference is to one and the same person. And the fact that both agent and patient are one in the process, and that the subject, without losing the awareness of his own individuality, was both subject and object of the process, led to the creation of a new voice. (Stéfanini 1962: 215).

pronoun is able to express a function which, in not distinguishing direct object from indirect object, subsumes both of them in the more general representation of patient." (Molho 1965: 193 tr.). Moignet concurs, saying that because the 'reflexive threshold' is within the subject, only those objects which 'refuse' the distinction of primary and secondary object can possibly represent the subject. (Moignet 1965: 136). Perhaps his meaning is that since the principl role of the pronoun is no longer to represent objects but to represent the passive side of the pronominal, then it makes good semiological sense to refrain from altering the form of the pronoun.

Internally at least, the possibility of making more extended and varied transitive relationships than those of direct and indirect object appears to be limited. These more specific relationships, of necessity reciprocal, must be expressed externally and made explicit through the use of a preposition, often in combination with the form

l'un avec (sans)(contre)(après, etc.) l'autre.

Despite the fact that the pronominal "can only account for the fusion between the subject and the primary or secondary object." (Stéfanini 1962: 437 tr.), any reciprocal relation, no matter how specific the link between the terms of the relation, must be expressed pronominally in French. What the diathesis requires is "that each term of the relation contribute to establish the relation and be subject to it. Of all the diverse forms which this relation can assume,

the diathesis takes account of only those which enter into the realm of its own syntactic possibilities: direct and indirect transitivity. Others are most often marked by the construction which has become the most generalized expression of reciprocity: the appositive 'l'(les) un(s)... l'(les) autre(s)'."(Stéfanini 1962: 470 tr.). These more specific relations are best seen then as being simply more precise extensions of direct or indirect transitivity.

Not every pronominal verb however can be said to have internal transitivity. There is a distinction often made by grammarians between 'essentially pronominal' verbs and 'accidentally pronominal' verbs, the basis of the distinction being whether the verb is ever used without the reflexive pronoun. If it is, it is only accidentally pronominal, and if never used without the pronoun, it is 'essentially' pronominal. But Guillaume disputes the criterion establishing the distinction. For him a verb is not essentially pronominal unless it is totally intransitive, both internally and externally. There are some verbs like s'arroger, which are always accompanied by a reflexive pronoun but whose indirect internal transitivity is discernable in a sentence like:

(36) Napoléon s'est arrogé tout le pouvoir

while there are other verbs which are not always pronominal but which, when pronominal, display behaviour which is characteristic of essentially pronominal verbs in that they agree with the subject, (cf. s'apercevoir, s'attaquer,

se douter de, se taire, se plaindre, s'emparer de, se saisir de, etc.) The important feature for Guillaume of these essential pronominals is that it is impossible to conceive of the reflexive pronoun as an object. Taking as an example:

(37) je me suis enfui

he says that "the pronoun me is completely incorporated into the verb. It is a semantic constituent of the verb, and no longer has any grammatical function....The pronoun is only a pronoun in appearance. Conceptually it has become a component of the verb. It has left its own category in order to enter into that of the verb." (Guillaume UL, 21 March 1946: 308 tr.). Any transitivity which the verb may have had at some time in its history has presumably been eliminated in the fusion of the reflexive object into the sense of the verb. And so essential or absolute pronominals appear to have lost their internal transitivity to become totally intransitive, with the effective incidence of the sémantèse predicating itself on nothing more than the process itself, in a way similar to the patterns of incidence in "marcher".

The transitivity of pronominals is not confined within the verb, however, but may range beyond the subject to establish links with other parts of the sentence. Blinkenberg observes that "this type of (pronominal) construction, characterized by internal transitivity, which implies intransitivity for the whole group in relation to the rest of the sentence, can be found to admit a new transitivity..."

(Blinkenberg 1960: 131 tr.), whereby, for example

(38) je me repens

can be expanded to

(39) je me repens de tous mes pêchés.

(The preposition here for Blinkenberg (and not for a Guillaumean) is a transitivity morpheme deprived of its full meaning). What is astounding about this observation, though, is its closing qualification, namely that this external pronominal transitivity is "necessarily indirect". (Blinkenberg 1960: 131 tr.).

In other words, he is claiming that the pronominal can only relate to elements outside of the confines of subject-verb through the use of a preposition. And yet in French there are many pronominal constructions followed immediately by nouns which appear to be objects, and which Blinkenberg completely omits to consider, like

(40) Il s'est acheté une voiture

(41) Il se gratte les pieds.

The problem posed by constructions like these is this: if the relation between the reflexive pronoun and the verb is considered to be a transitive relation - as it appears to be by Stéfanini and Molho, and Moignet too, (at least in 1965), what is the nature of the relation between the verb and the following noun? The early solutions to the problem, posed in Stéfanini's book and two reviews of it, appear at first to be somewhat contrived to fit in with their theories of middle voice. But their solution, when considered in

terms of incidence, later appears to be justified.

The argument is as follows. In the pair of sentences:

(42a) Je me suis acheté une maison.
(42b) Je t'ai acheté une maison

une maison must be analysed in two different ways. It is obviously an object in (b): it is the external support for the effective incidence of the verb. But in (a), the sequence of je me immediately announces that "the process which is going to be evoked and whose semantic nature is unknown is perfectly defined in terms of its point of origin and its finish. Everything starts with this point and everything finishes with it. Obviously, the purchase must necessarily be made of an external object, but this object is incorporated into the possessions of the subject. And perhaps it is wrong to even speak of possessions, when it is impossible to use the verb avoir; when, for example, one cannot say, as it is sometimes possible in Italian,

mi ho comprato una casa ?

Would it not be proper to conclude that the pronominal verb in some way integrates the house with the subject, who thus finds his personal sphere increased?" (Stéfanini 1962: 104 tr.). Stéfanini's solution then is to incorporate the object somehow into the subject. Presumably, this would involve enlarging the sémantèse so that the verb would be understood to consist not simply of the notion "acheter" but of the whole notion acheter une maison. The effective incidence of this expanded sémantèse would then be free to seek as its

support the reflexive pronoun, and with je and me circumscribing the whole process, the transitivity would still be considered internal.

In his review of Stéfanini's book, Molho comments on this analysis and confirms it, but not before adding some modifications of his own. He considers that middle voice verbs must be formally intransitive, and that a sentence like

(43) il s'achète une maison

is only transitive materially. He does not define what he means by formal and material, but hints at it in explaining that "the matter is transitive but the form which conjugates it is not...." (Molho 1965: 193 tr.). He means perhaps that the material arrangement of the words is that of a transitive construction, but that the diathesis admits of no predication other than to the subject. And formal perhaps is in reference to underlying structure rather than surface forms. In any case, the consequence is that "in il s'achète une maison, maison is not the object of the verb il s'achète, formally intransitive, but the complement of the verb acheter, materially transitive, treated as a middle voice verb. After the transitive verb and its object have been incorporated into middle voice, the voice circumscribes the whole and integrates it into the sphere of the subject. There is a conflict between form and matter, quickly resolved in French by the dominance of the formal over the material, a dominance which over the centuries has assured the unity of middle voice." (Molho 1965: 193-4 tr.).

What is evident from Molho's explanation is that he believes that the underlying structures of middle voice (la forme) are not what the surface structures (la matière) would seem to indicate, and that despite appearances, the construction is only internally transitive. For him, the effective incidence of the sémantèse 'acheter' goes only to the reflexive pronoun; une maison is not transitively connected to the verb and is to be considered as a sort of adjectival complement, such as un dollar in

(44) Cela coûte un dollar.

And, although he later seems to revise his opinions, Moignet concurs with Stéfanini's analysis of this type of pronominal construction, noting that "it is the unit composed of the verb and its object which enters middle voice; the house, object of the purchase, being thus somehow incorporated into the personality of the subject." (Moignet 1965: 137 tr.). And, of a similar sort of sentence, in which the reflexive pronoun is often said to act as a marker indicating inalienable possession, like

(45) il se lave les mains

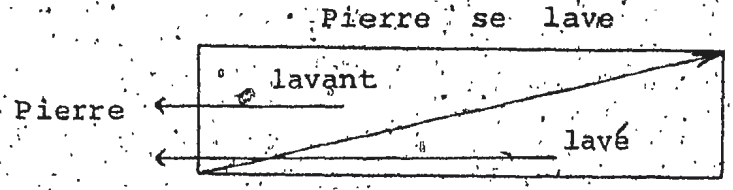
Moignet says that les mains is not a real object but a 'respective complement' or accusatif de relation, whose role is to specify which part of the subject is passive in the process. (Moignet 1965: 137). The apparent objects are then either parts of the subject, intrinsic to any definition of the subject, just as the notion 'person' automatically entails notions of 'body', 'mind', etc. or they are external elements which by virtue of being expressed in middle voice

are embodied in the subject. In both instances the transitivity is internal.

In a 1973 paper however, Moignet indicates that his ideas have changed on the transitivity of pronominals. Whereas a sentence like

(46) Pierre se lave

is considered intransitive, with both causative and effective incidence going to the subject, as in the diagram:

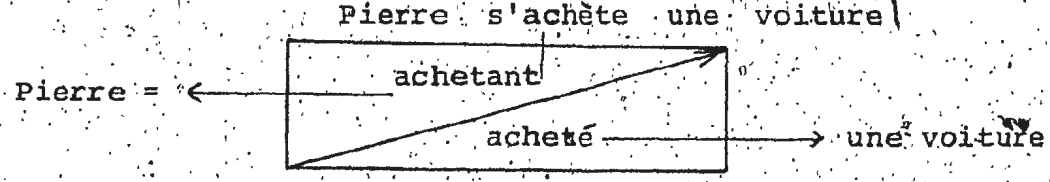


(from Moignet 1973: 369)

a sentence like:

(47) Pierre s'achète une voiture

is considered to be transitive. The pronominal in this case does not signify that the causative and effective incidences must go to the same person; it "denotes only a certain passivity of the agent in the operation, the sort of minimal passivity which consists of the interest which he feels, passively, in the process. The sémantèse in fact leaves the causative person, but it does not leave entirely ..." (Moignet 1973: 371 tr.). The play of incidence in this sentence can then be illustrated as follows:



(Moignet 1973: 371).

This revised account of pronominal transitivty seems to avoid the intricacies of earlier explanations, and comes as a relief to those who instinctively recognize a fully direct object in il s'achète une maison, and who feel it hard to accept une maison as forming part of the subject. But Moignet's solution has a disadvantage in that it seems to assume a different sort of relationship between the reflexive pronoun and the verb according to whether the verb is externally transitive or intransitive. When a pronominal verb has no external object, then presumably effective incidence is the force which fuses the two-part subject into one. What then, in a pronominal verb which has or appears to have an external object, is the nature of the force linking the reflexive pronoun to the subject noun or pronoun, and verb?

There are three possibilities. The first assumes a fundamental underlying difference between transitive and intransitive pronominals. The effective incidence which operates internally in a pronominal with no external object, operates externally in a pronominal sémantèse which has an external object. In order to account for the relation of the reflexive pronoun with the verb, one would have to assume that it is of the same nature as the reflexive pronoun in an essentially pronominal verb, in the sense that it is no longer joined to the verb through syntactic forces of incidence, and has become a constituent semantic element only. But in a sentence like:

(48) Il s'est donné la mort

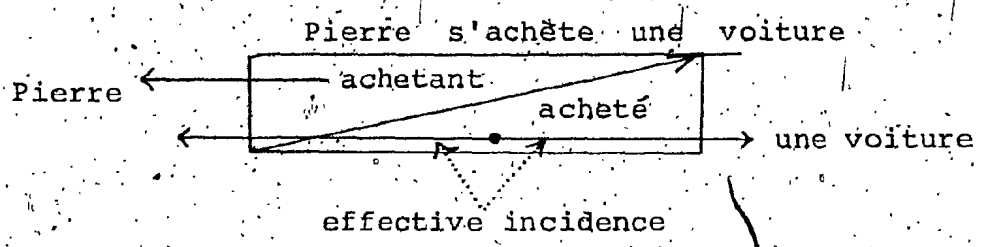
it is quite obvious that the relation of se to the verb is one of indirect transitivity, that is, a syntactic relation, and that se is not semantically fused with the verb, as in s'enfuir.

A second possibility is that pronominal verbs are doubly transitive, in that they possess one sort of incidence internally, binding the reflexive pronoun and the verb in a special pronominal link, which can be a direct or indirect relation, and another sort of incidence externally, binding the pronominal group to elements outside itself in a direct relation. In order to operate, this reflexive incidence requires that there be no distinction in form between the pronouns expressing direct and indirect transivity. The mechanism of incidence could not operate if the indirectness of a given reflexive pronoun was made explicit by a preposition, which is the bridge built to join the gap left by a breakdown of incidence. If the link between verb and reflexive pronoun was not one of incidence, that is, of syntactic fusion, then the pronoun would be assumed to be an integral semantic component of the verb, an assumption contradicted by the freedom which there is in French to manipulate the reflexive particle as a separate morpheme in order to make almost any verb pronominal.

The trouble with positing an additional reflexive incidence to account for cases of transitive pronominals however, is that effective incidence is thus given a free hand to

operate outside the scope of the verb. Effective incidence is a predicating force, and its support is what the verb predicates its activity on. The verb no longer has an inner limit of tension, and automatically ceases to be a middle voice verb. The separation of effective incidence from causative incidence implies avoir as auxiliary - and yet the pronominal uses être.

The third and final possibility to account for external transitivity of pronominals is that effective incidence can seek a double support. The emphasis of Moignet's assertion that the pronominal, when the verb is transitive, "does not signify the inability of the verbal sémantèse to go outside of the causative support..." (Moignet 1973: 371 tr.) must be disputed. A pronominal sémantèse can be pronominal only insofar as the sémantèse is confined within itself, within the causative support. If effective incidence can also seek support externally, it is only on the understanding that part, at least, of the total effective support is also causative support. The subject must be included in any movement of the verb so that any object which the verb has is also integrated into the sphere of subject and verb. A modification of Moignet's illustration of incidence can then be made:



In this sense, Stéfanini's proposal that in il s'achète une maison, une maison has become incorporated into the possessions of the subject, is much more plausible. There is no need to consider the sémantèse enlarged to include the notion of "acheter une maison". All that needs to be understood is that effective incidence of a transitive pronominal verb always has reference to the subject. Whatever the external support for effective incidence may be, this incidence always comes back to the subject, and the resultative side of the verb, whether it includes external objects or not, is always ultimately said of the subject. Only this interpretation of the workings of incidence allows for the coexistence within pronominal voice of an internal limit of tension combined with external predication of the verb. In cases where a particular pronominal sémantèse refuses to exteriorise its effective incidence, but directs it exclusively to the reflexive pronoun, and thereby to the subject, a relationship with an external nominal sémantèse can be brought about by the intercession of a preposition. Thus:

(48i) je me passe facilement de télévision,

where de mediates between verbal and nominal sémantèse.

The 'surcomposé' of pronominal verbs

The third aspect of the French verb, called the surcomposé or bi-extensive or bi-transcendent aspect, is not encountered nearly as frequently as the extensive or the tensive aspects. Even in the eighteenth century, Beauzée remarked that such forms were rare in writing and avoided in high style. 'They were more admissible than admitted, and yet constituted a resource which the language must not try to do without. (Stéfanini 1954: 84). If frequency of usage was a factor determining the importance of a form, then the bi-extensive in French would be very unimportant. But as a virtual and possible aspect of the French verb, it must be given as much theoretical attention as the other two aspects. (Stéfanini 1954: 84).

The occurrence of surcomposé forms today seems to be a function of many factors, which may be geographical (they are more frequent in the South of France), social (they are unknown to large numbers of the middle class), lexical (they are used mainly with verbs like commencer, achever, finir, etc.) and syntactic (they are more frequent in temporal subordinate clauses than in main clauses) (Grammaire Larousse 1964: 331)[48]. Delattre (1950) was surprised to find a group of French-speaking teachers almost entirely unaware of the surcomposé of pronominal verbs, despite the fact that these

[48] The authors add the enjoinder: "On les utilisera avec précaution" (Grammaire Larousse 1964: 331).

forms are found in written French from the thirteenth century[49] and have been noted in grammars at least since 1767, in l'Encyclopédie (Beauzée's article 'TEMPS').

In an informal survey carried out by me along the lines followed by Delattre, ten native speakers of French were asked to replace a surcomposé with avoir by a semantically equivalent construction using a pronominal verb, in the sentences in footnote 50.[50] My results confirmed Delattre's, who found that only two out of fifteen French teachers of French produced surcomposé pronominal forms. Of my ten subjects responding to forty sentences, only one person produced "quand je me suis eu promené" for no.1., and even she resorted to rephrasing, protests about the stylistic awkwardness and lack of naturalness of the sentences, and other expedients to avoid similar forms in 2., 3. and 4., as did virtually everyone else. One out of forty: resistance to the bi-extensive form seems to be high!

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[49] Some of the first examples of the surcomposé aspect were pronominals, found by Stéfanini in the Livre d'Artus, dating from the last quarter of the thirteenth century. (Stéfanini 1954: 102).

[50] The sentences were:

1. Je ne suis rentré chez moi que quand j'ai eu marché deux longues heures. (replace with se promener).
2. J'ai attendu Paul, et dès qu'il (a eu mis ses habits) (s'habiller) on est descendu dîner.
3. Les amis de Paul l'ont quitté dès qu'il (a eu compris) (se rendre compte du) le tour qu'on lui jouait.
4. Dès qu'il (a eu entrevu la défaite) (se voir perdu), ça s'est remarqué sur son visage.

(Delattre 1950: 106).

Yet Beauzée considered "je me suis eu promené" to be the correct form,[51] and it can be heard today in the spoken language.[52]

Perhaps its infrequency is due to the strange impression the form gives: it appears that être is the auxiliary of avoir in a construction like il s'est eu blessé, which runs counter to the instinct of the French about their language. And yet the nature of the pronominal voice as expression of middle diathesis does not permit any other form to express the "perfect of a perfect" (Stéfanini 1954: 91 tr.). The explanation is bound up with the very nature of pronominal voice: the constant, simultaneous presence of activity and passivity in the subject, and the inner limit of verbal tension.

The question which has to be asked is why the form

(49) * il s'a été blessé

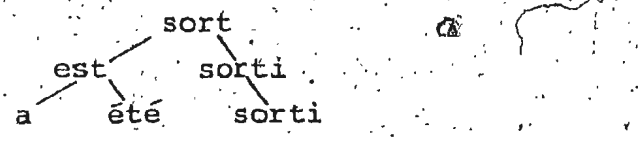
is not the correct one for the bi-transcendant aspect. If the pronominal formed its surcomposé the way other verbs do, then this would be the required construction. According to Tesnière, the law governing the surcomposé states that when a compound aspect is formed, "the grammatical characteristics

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[51] "Au lieu donc de dire: après que je m'ai été promené longtemps, expression justement condamnée par M. de Dangeau, on dira: après que je me suis eu promené longtemps ou après m'être eu promené longtemps." (Beauzée in l'Encyclopédie, art. 'Temps', quoted by Damourette and Pichon 1911-36: 724).

[52] Damourette and Pichon overheard the following in a bus: "Quand il s'est eu embarqué, quand il l'a eu fait, il a vu... (Damourette and Pichon: 724). And Grevisse notes: "En somme, les formes surcomposées appartiennent surtout à la langue parlée, mais elles y sont extrêmement vivantes, en particulier dans les subordonnées temporelles." (Grevisse 1964: 612).

are passed over to the auxiliary," and the auxiliary is itself compounded. (Stéfanini 1962: 99). Thus:



are the three aspects of a resultative verb.[53]

Why not: il se blesse ⟶ il s'est blesse ⟶ *il s'a été blessé ? - since both verbs have an inner limit of tension?

The answer lies in the notional content of these verbs once they have entered the extensive phase, i.e. être sorti and s'être blessé. When the action of sortir has ceased and the verb enters extension, with all its tension depleted, it cannot be given a new tension with the same auxiliary. The action cannot be evoked again because having 'left', one must re-enter in order to 'leave' again.[54] There is no more activity on the part of the subject when the verb is extended: the subject is entirely passive. Notionally, sortir is all finished in extension and it has no subsequent phase.

But, once extended, sortir becomes être sorti, which is

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[53] De Kock contends that this form is non-existent in French. He says that the resultative verb "ne...connaît pas de temps surcomposé (avoir + été + attribut): (De Kock 1969: 36), and he goes on to say that *avoir été mort and *avoir été né are impossible, and that if il a été sorti is found, it would be in a sentence like Cet ivrogne a été vite sorti du bar, where sortir is transitive.

But Cornu (1953) cites numerous examples of intransitives like sortir in the surcomposé, like Mme de Sévigné's "Quand il a été parti, M. le Chancelier a dit..." (Cornu 1953: 65). As a preterite, indicating accomplished action, the resultative has no surcomposé, but as a perfect, indicating a state acquired as a result of accomplished action, the surcomposé is certainly possible.

[54] "Une fois sorti, il faut rentrer pour pouvoir sortir de nouveau." (Stéfanini 1962: 101).

not an action at all. It presents a vastly different verbal image from sortir, indicating the state which has resulted from the action and in which the subject is a passive participant. As a verb of state, être sorti does not have an inner limit of tension, for it is no longer the verb itself which imposes its finishing point on the subject. The subject is free to remain in the state of être sorti as long as he wishes. And the only auxiliary which can give a new tension to such a verb of state is AVOIR - which is the auxiliary of être, verb of existence. That is why the form which expresses that the action of sortir happened before another past action is avoir été sorti - whose verbal image is "the memory of a state".[55]

The internal limit of verbal tension of resultatives is imposed by the particular sémantèse: the semantic content of this relatively small number of verbs dictates to the subject when he will cease to be a totally free agent and become a totally bound patient. But with pronominal verbs, the diathesis itself determines the appropriate auxiliary for the expression of concomitant activity and passivity. For the expression of a notion which is always partly active, the language might have chosen to use avoir. But an analysis of the pronominal process je me lave shows that between the first activity of the subject and the first effect of the activity, a very short period of time elapses. The same amount of time

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[55] "...c'est un acte il sort, un état quand il est sorti, le souvenir d'un état quand il a été sorti." (Stéfanini 1962 102).

elapses between the last activity and the last effect. The process therefore begins actively and finishes passively. Even though during the whole of the tensive phase activity and passivity are simultaneous, the form begins at the instant when the active will of the subject, represented by je, begins the activity. And when that activity has finally ceased, there is still an instant before the last effect is felt at its point of application, represented by me. It is precisely at this instant of ceased activity and awareness of passivity that the threshold separating tensive and extensive phases of the verb is situated. And this moment of entry into extension, which demands the auxiliary être to express the passivity of the subject at that instant, is a result not of the semantic content of the verb, but of the voice itself.[56]

The fact that middle diathesis absolutely requires être in order to be extended is why *il s'a été blessé is not the bi-extensive form of the pronominal. Se blesser, in all its aspects, is always middle voice. It never becomes fully a

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[56] The ideas are Stéfanini's, who sums up in this way: "Que les pronominaux soient auxiliés par être, parce que, comme nous le pensons pour le français d'aujourd'hui, ils entraînent limite interne de tension, qu'ils le soient parce qu'essentiellement actifs en début de tension, ils sont essentiellement passifs en fin de tension, dans tous les cas ce n'est pas le contenu sémantique de l'action telle que l'exprime le radical qui joue le rôle déterminant, mais la forme qu'elle revêt. Être est imposé non par le sémantisme du verbe, mais par la diathèse." (Stéfanini 1962: 98-99).

state: s'être blessé is indeed être blessé, but only partly. The rest indicates that the subject is also author of the action, not just its recipient. The internal limit of tension of se blesser is not imposed by the notion of 'injuring', as the internal limit of sortir is imposed by the notion of 'leaving'. It is the idea of 'self-injuring' which imposes the limit.[57] To convey this notion extensively, être is required in all aspects, and to abandon être would be to abandon middle voice. The indispenable auxiliary must be il s'est....

And so the choice has narrowed to *il s'est été blessé, which is impossible since été blessé implies no limit of tension, and to il s'est eu blessé, which also appears impossible because avoir, for reasons already stated, cannot extend a pronominal. What has to be done in order to justify the form il s'est eu blessé, sanctioned by the language, is to identify within the pronominal voice, a voice of synthesis, the active element and the passive element with specific forms. "In other words, if it is admitted that within this voice of synthesis, which the pronominal is, the active form

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[57] "Si l'on préfère, il y a dans le verbe se blesser une limite interne de tension, comme dans sortir, mais alors que dans ce dernier, la limite de tension contenue dans le concept de sortie est définitivement franchie à l'aspect extensif être sorti (verbe d'état sans limite interne de tension), dans se blesser, au contraire, la limite de tension n'est pas dans le concept de blessure mais dans celui...d'"auto-blessure", et elle est indiquée par se qui accompagne la notion verbale dans tous ses aspects: extensif comme s'être blessé ou bi-extensif s'être eu blessé." (Stéfanini 1962: 102).

constitutes the active element and the reflexive pronoun the passive element, both indispensable to the very definition of voice; that in the compound aspect the past participle which by nature is indifferent to voice here marks the limit reached by the active form, the auxiliary être for its part emphasizing that this limit of tension is located in the person of the subject, which is passive insofar as it undergoes its own action, it will be understood that in the bi-compound aspect, s'est remains to denote the perfective nature of the action, which, in any case, unless it leaves pronominal voice, can have no limit of tension other than the person of the subject. The past participle, which in the compound aspect marked the end of tension of the active form (blesser) will mark in the surcomposé the end of tension of the active: avoir blessé. Only the active element of the verb can be in the third aspect."[58] (Stéfanini 1962: 102 tr.).

The principles involved in this reasoning again demonstrate the power of middle diathesis to determine form. The normal law governing formation of the surcomposé, which compounds the auxiliary, is here contravened, because the introduction of avoir into that part of the pronominal which denotes the subject's passivity and the verb's inner limit of tension would take the verb out of the middle voice. In order

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[58] "EU" peut modifier un élément actif d'un ensemble à la fois actif et passif, et faire passer d'un plan deuxième, celui de blessé, à un troisième, celui de eu blessé. Il s'est eu / blessé est inconcevable, mais non il s'est / eu blessé." (Stéfanini 1962: 102).

to remain within middle voice, an expedient had to be found. That expedient is to compound only the part of the pronominal denoting activity - the past participle, by the same law as that governing active transitive verbs.[59]

The transformationalist approach to pronominal voice

It has been assumed so far in this work that the unity of form of the pronominal voice (the constant presence in the conjugation of the reflexive pronoun, and of the auxiliary être in the transcendant aspect) ensures unity of meaning. Whether a given form in context conveys a reflexive, middle or passive notion, there is coherence throughout because, in tongue, the subject is always partly active and partly passive. The approach which generative grammarians have taken to pronominal voice is completely different. What counts for them in their search for a deep structure from which they derive surface forms is, ironically enough, the surface meanings of these forms.

The terms active and passive are sometimes used in syntax to characterize types of sentences in contrast to their

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[59] cf. Moignet's remarks on the surcomposé: "C'est la persistance à tous les aspects de la notion se blesser, de la limite intérieure de tension, inhérente à la passivité jointe à l'activité du sujet et symbolisée par le pronom réfléchi, qui impose l'auxiliaire être aux deux stades de l'extensif, et du bi-extensif, alors que dans la notion sortir, la limite interne de tension n'existe plus au stade être sorti, d'où le surcomposé il a été sorti." (Moignet 1965: 138).

function of designating verbal forms. A passive sentence in this definition is one conveying the passive notion of subject as patient. To the transformationalist, the sentences:

(50a) Son oeuvre est caractérisée par la finesse de son style, and (50b) Son oeuvre se caractérise par la finesse de son style convey the same meaning, and must therefore be derived from the same deep structure.[60] In his study of the pronominal, then, Ruwet[61] groups sentences like (b) with passive periphrastics like (a) because of their identity of meaning. This of course implies a split in the unity of pronominal voice, each type of meaning associated with pronominals pointing to its own particular deep structure.[62]

Ruwet establishes three main categories of pronominal verbs. The first is the group of reflexives, those verbs which present a subject performing a transitive action on himself. This group is perhaps the easiest to treat transformationally.

(51) Pierre se bat

is considered to have as base

(52) Pierre bat Pierre or NP_1 V NP_1.

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60 "adopter le point de vue syntaxique, c'est aussi ne plus réserver la qualification de passive aux constructions comportant une forme passive du verbe..." (Stéfanini 1971: 115).

61 Ruwet, Nicolas, "Les Constructions Pronominales en français," in Le Français Moderne, 40, 1972, p.102-125.

62 "Il était dans la logique de la démarche transformationelle de lever ces homonymies que constituent, en somme, les divers emplois des pronominaux, et d'expliquer chaque effet de sens par des structures profondes différentes." (Stéfanini 1971: 116).

The co-reference of subject and object leads to a Reflexive Transformation replacing the second occurence of NP_1 by the reflexive soi, which is then changed by normal pronoun transformations to Pierre se bat. (Stéfanini 1971: 116). These changes seem acceptably straightforward and logical.

But deriving full reflexives from active transitive sentences seems to imply that these reflexives should be conjugated with avoir. And it is true that the rules of agreement with the past participle of these pronominal verbs, which are essentially the same as those of a verb conjugated with avoir, appear to suggest that avoir is indeed the underlying auxiliary. According to Stéfanini however, these rules are artificial and were imposed late in the language, and therefore do not reveal the real relations of transitivity operating within and without the pronominal. Agreement in Old French and in modern dialects of French show the expected agreement with the subject.[63] Etre is not a replacement for avoir, introduced by a low-order surface rule. The raison d'être of être is the verb's inner limit of tension.

Recognizing that a base with the pattern NP_1 V NP_1 could not account transformationally for an essentially pronominal verb like s'enfuir, Ruwet opts to put se in the base for

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63 ..."ces règles (d'accord) sont artificielles et tardives, en ce qui concerne les pronominaux, et des états de langue anciens ou dialectaux ont l'accord qu'on attend avec l'auxiliaire être." (Stéfanini 1971: 114 n.9).

this second type of verb whose internal transitivity is unclear, and which is rarely if ever used without the reflexive pronoun. Thus the rewrite rule for this sort of verb is VP ⟶ se V (NP), and this rule is extended to cover verbs whose value is middle. Ruwet does this because despite the transitive non-pronominal use of many of these verbs, he considers the correspondance between pronominal and non-pronominal uses too "capricious" to establish a transformational derivation.[64]

But where does one draw the line between transitive reflexive and intransitive middle values of the pronominal? At what point does the transitive link between verb and reflexive pronoun grow so weak that the pronoun can no longer be analyzed as an object? The status of se in:

(53a) Pierre se bat avec un fouet.

is not the same as se in:

(53b) Pierre se bat contre ses ennemis.

and one could assume that the middle value of (b) assigns a different deep structure to it than to (a). But in

(54a) Pierre regarde ses amis, and (54(b) Pierre se regarde

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[64] In the semantically similar series of verbs expressing bodily movement:

A_1	A_2	A_3
s'asseoir	s'accroupir	s'affaler
s'agenouiller	se prosterner	s'affaisser

Stéfanini points out that the A_1 verbs can be used transitively without the reflexive pronoun, the A_3 verbs can never be used without the pronoun, and the A_2 verbs are only rarely used transitively. (Stéfanini 1971: 118). With the border between reflexive values and other values so blurred, the positing of se in the base seems the only way to avoid different derivational routes for semantically similar verbs.

and:

(55a) Pierre irrite ses amis, and (54b) Pierre s'irrite. is there any clear indication of the status of (54b) and (55b)? Is the distinction between reflexive and middle so well established that there is no question about which deep structure a particular verb comes from? Stéfanini thinks that the distinction is impossible to establish, and says "...I declare my inability to give a definition to the middle (stricto sensu) which will distinguish it unequivocally from the reflexive pronominal." (Stefanini 1962: 414 tr.). The behaviour of middle value pronominals seems less capricious than Ruwet's definition of it!

The third set of pronominals is the group expressing passive notions, and these, it is proposed, have the same deep structure as passive periphrastic forms. The base from which all such passives are to be derived is a transitive active sentence with an animate agent as subject. A passive periphrastic construction may or may not express this agent as a complement on the surface; a passive pronominal will have to delete it, because sentences like:

(56) La France s'est longtemps gouvernée par un roi, acceptable in classic French, are no longer possible. (Stéfanini 1971: 121-122). By what route, then, does one arrive at:

(57) Ça se peut..?

If underlying this sentence there is a transitive active sentence, and if there are simply a certain number of transformations between the base and the surface, transformations

which are "meaning-preserving", neither adding to nor taking away from the notional content of base and surface, then what sort of animate agent can be imagined to underly ça se peut? The base must be:

(58) Δ peut ça

with a dummy animate subject. On peut ça has a much more concrete meaning than ça se peut, and to proceed grammatically from a supposed

(59) Dieu peut ça

to ça se peut would seem impossible. (Stéfanini 1971: 124).

(A very much more convenient account of passive pronominals is provided by Donaldson (1970). His assumption is to start from a deep structure containing a "semantically vacuous passive marker". From this deep structure will emerge a passive verb. Some verbs denote passive notions periphrastically, others pronominally, with exactly the same meaning, of course. How is the difference of form to be accounted for? Donaldson's answer is to say: "we maintain that the 'reflexive' particle of those pronominal passives (herinafter referred to as pseudo-reflexives or intransitive pronominals) is a MEANINGLESS ADDITIVE (emphasis mine) introduced transformationally. It just so happens that the phonetic manifestation of the additive element is a reflexive morpheme." (Donaldson 1973: 79). If a linguist can actually call morphemes "meaningless additives", then he is denying the whole significance of language and is quickly arguing himself out of a job!)

The objections raised here to the approach of transformationalists to pronominal voice may be petty and easily explained away; but what seems to fly in the face of common sense is the attempt to make a single, coherent form fit into three different moulds on the basis of differences in surface meaning. There are dozens of different surface meanings for the verb faire, yet no one to my knowledge suggests that each of these differences can be explained by a different underlying form. The great polysemy of pronominal voice can be attributed to one simple fact: the co-existence within the subject of variable proportions of activity and passivity, marked morphologically by the double mention of the subject.

Agreement of pronominals in compound tenses

The question of past participle agreement in compound tenses of pronominal verbs is a vexed one. Rules given in the grammars covering this mainly orthographical problem are invariably countered by many exceptions provided by some of the best writers. The confusion surrounding the phenomenon of agreement could in fact suggest a breakdown in the unity of pronominal voice.

In modern French, the situation seems to be roughly as follows: where the reflexive pronoun has a reflexive value, in the sense that the subject is considered to be doing something to himself, then the past participle will agree

with the pronoun if the pronoun is a direct object. If it is indirect, there is no agreement. However, in these indirect cases, the past participle will agree with any direct object of the pronominal providing that that object precedes the verb. Thus, no agreement with:

(60) Les étudiants se sont posé la question,

but agreement with:

(61) La question que les étudiants se sont posée.

In those verbs where the reflexive pronoun cannot be analysed as some sort of object, the past participle is generally said to agree with the subject.[65] But there are exceptions: verbs like se plaire and se rire, whose pronouns are linked with the verb in a relation which is not directly or indirectly transitive, are nonetheless invariable. (That is, from a normative point of view. Many good authors make the agreement, but of course there is no way to tell if this agreement is meant to be with subject or reflexive pronoun.)

An observation covering all cases but four is given by Grevisse, who says that so long as the reflexive pronoun is not obviously an indirect object, the past participle of pronominal verbs is subject to variation, with the exceptions of se rire, se plaire, se déplaire and se complaire (Grevisse 1964: 756).

A division is thus established on the basis of whether

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[65] "Le participe passé des verbes pronominaux avec pronom censément préfixé ou agglutiné (qui n'est ni objet direct ni objet indirect, mais un simple morphème verbal) s'accorde avec le sujet." And, "Le participe passé des verbes pronominaux passifs s'accorde toujours avec le sujet." (Grevisse 1964: 754-755).

a given pronominal has a reflexive value or not. If it does, agreement seems to operate as if the verb were conjugated with avoir, and the past participle agrees with the preceding direct object, if there is one. If the pronominal's value is not reflexive, then the agreement seems to be with the subject. The implication of this state of affairs is that there is a perceived lack of unity in pronominal voice, and that users of the language consider that a reflexive pronominal is quite a different thing from a pronominal with middle or passive value, despite the shared morphology of reflexive pronoun and auxiliary être. Such a division might even serve to substantiate the transformationalist claim that different pronominal values can be accounted for by highly dissimilar deep structures.

But is the implication made on the basis of agreement justifiable? Are there serious conclusions to be drawn from the behaviour of pronominal past participles, which seem to vary on the basis of surface meaning?

The first thing to consider is that the phenomenon of agreement itself is not determined at the level of tongue. It is only in discourse that word-order is arranged and the status of direct objects confirmed. Data concerning agreement do not therefore constitute an argument for different deep structures for pronominals having different surface values. (Guillaume (1971(B): 145) indicates that he believes that agreement occurs at the level of discourse when he says that the incidence of the adjective to the category of

person occurs only in discourse, and that this incidence is demonstrated grammatically by agreement.)

Another consideration is that agreement in old and, to a lesser extent, in middle French, was with the subject. (Stéfanini 1962: 329). The development of agreement with the direct object seems to have come about as a result of a sort of folk-etymology which analysed attributive constructions like:

(63) Il s'est cru mal traité

in such a way that the attribute was considered as an object since it completed the sense of the sentence in the same way a noun would -

(63) Il s'est cru honnête homme.

The equation of attribute with object, along with the identification of attribute with reflexive pronoun, tended to obscure the true function of se, which is to express the inner limit of tension of the verb and the combination of agent and patient within the verb, and led to separate consideration of the role of patient distinct from that of agent.[66] Agreement then came to be between reflexive pronoun and past participle if the former were direct object, and where the pronoun was indirect, there was no agreement.

But how this new agreement with the direct object pronoun

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[66] "Le dépouillement des textes du XIIIe siècle...prouve et la vitalité, la persistance de l'accord du participe passé pronominal avec le sujet et la disparition progressive de l'ancien accord avec le sujet devant le nouveau, avec le régime, dans le tour pronominal attributif." (Stéfanini 1962: 329).

came to be generalized to the extent that all direct objects which preceded the verb brought about agreement of the past participle, is something of a mystery. Stéfanini believes that the rules covering pronominal verb agreement are totally imposed from outside by grammarians and that they do not therefore express the true underlying structures of the construction. The agreement which would properly reflect the nature of the pronominal verb is with the subject only.[67]

De Kock considers that agreement is a curious combination of semantic and syntactic criteria. He observes that agreement in pronominals is always with the term denoting the patient, (notional) with the one restriction that the patient must be stated before the process is stated (syntactical) unless the patient is also subject, in which case word-order is not a factor. (De Kock 1969: 44). The following examples illustrate his thesis:

(64) la question s'est posée de savoir:...

(65) ...que se sont posées les questions suivantes.

(66) la question que les étudiants se sont posée

(67) il s'est posé une question

(68) les étudiants se sont posé la question suivante.

He concludes by saying that "the agreement of the attribute is surprising because it is conceptual and not grammatical;

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[67] "...ces règles (d'accord) sont artificielles et tardives, en ce qui concerne les pronominaux, et des états de langue anciens ou dialectaux ont l'accord qu'on attend avec l'auxiliaire être." (Stéfanini 1971: 114, footnote 9).

it is determined according to the semantic function and not according to the syntactic function." (De Kock 1969: 45 tr.).

The tidiness of De Kock's classification however becomes messy under scrutiny. His definition of 'patient' must be highly selective if his rule is to work. The selection must eliminate the reflexive pronoun in sentences such as:

(69) Ils se sont parlé

(70) Elles se sont expliqué, etc.

from the category of patient. In other words, when the reflexive pronoun is indirect, it must not be considered a patient, even though in such sentences as:

(71) Elles se sont souvenues de nos promesses,

where the reflexive pronoun cannot be analysed as either direct or indirect, it is to be considered as patient. But the patient status of se in Ils se sont parlé is obvious; the person towards whom the process is directed is the subject, and it is the function of se to show this. And so, while De Kock's rules for pronominal agreement appear succinct and regular, they are in fact unworkable, because they fail to account for the lack of agreement in cases where the reflexive pronoun is indirect.

Donaldson, in his thesis on French Reflexive Verbs, makes the absolutely astounding assertion that "the past-participle of all pronominal verbs - including those described as absolutely pronominal - agrees with the reflexive pronoun if it functions as an object-formed (0) case." (Donaldson 1973: 54). (The 0 case in case-grammar is defined as the "case

which is semantically most neutral, and identified by the semantic interpretation of the verb itself." (Donaldson 1973: 14).

His claim is made in order to refute Grevisse's rule that the past participle of all pronominals, barring reflexives, reciprocals, and se rire, se plaire, se déplaire and se complaire, agrees with the subject. Donaldson would say that all verbs which appear to agree with the subject have in fact a case-frame containing an O marker, and that this is object-formed as a reflexive pronoun, thus causing agreement. For a verb like plaire, with an invariable past participle, the case-frame would be [———— O + D] (D = Dative, the animate noun affected by the state or action identified by the verb), and "O, and not D, must be subject-fronted. D, obviously, must be object-formed, and the past-participle will remain invariable since only object-formed NPs dominated by O will mark agreement." (Donaldson 1969: 55).

Such a theory is completely untenable. In the first place, many French writers, including Maurois and Aragon (see Grevisse 1964: 754-755), mark the agreement on the past participles plu, déplu, and complu just as they would with any other non-reflexive verb.[68] Does that mean one case-frame

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[68] "...there are a few verbs the past participle of which is supposed never to vary, e.g. se rire, se plaire. It is alleged that se is in the dative, these verbs being indirectly transitive (rire à qqn., plaire à qqn.) Thus:

"Ils se sont ri de nos menaces, Elles se sont plu à nous tourmenter"

But the relationship between the constructions of the simple and the pronominal forms of the verb has long ceased to be felt, and the tendency today is to write:

"Ils se sont plus à nous tourmenter." (Mansion 1924: 236).

for plaire, etc., for these authors, and quite another for everyone else? Is plaire to be considered two different verbs with two different deep structures, solely on the basis of some free surface variation in agreement?

In the second place, there are many instances of past-participle agreement where there can be no question of reflexive pronoun derivation from object-formed 0 case. Consider the sentence:

(72) Les étudiants se sont posé les questions,

in which there is no agreement. If there is no agreement, then the surface reflexive pronoun cannot have emerged from an underlying 0 case, because if it had, then the verb would show agreement.

Now, a low-level, meaning-preserving transformation will alter the order of the above sentence, giving:

(73) Les questions que les etudiants se sont posées.

Suddenly, there is agreement. And yet it has been decided that se poser contains no 0 case from which the reflexive pronoun is derived. So the agreement in this case - and in all others - must be with something other than an object-formed 0 case: otherwise a simple word-order change would not have been enough to bring about agreement.

Pronominal agreement therefore does not seem to point the way to any clear understanding of the real structure of the pronominal construction. Agreement is a phenomenon of discourse, it is almost entirely orthographical and only rarely a feature of the spoken language, and the rules governing its occurence are based on a separate analysis of

subject and reflexive pronoun, an analysis which overlooks the true function of the reflexive pronoun, which is to mark a synthesis and an identification of the roles of patient and agent.

CHAPTER FOUR:

VALUES OF MIDDLE VOICE

Reflexive

One would expect a verb-form generally called reflexive to be mainly reserved for actions done by the subject to himself. Those who have learned French in school are familiar with the method of teaching the pronominal construction. We are given an intimate glimpse of M. Thibault's early morning routine; il se lève, il se lave, il se rase, il s'habille, etc. etc. But just how common is this reflexive use of the pronominal?

In order to find out, two texts were examined in detail: D.E.AGER's Styles and Registers in Contemporary French (henceforward abbreviated to "A"), a collection of passages from seven different non-literary areas (journalism, law, politics, commerce, administration, science and technology), and the first one hundred pages of text (p.9 - 109) of F. Mauriac's Génitrix (henceforward abbreviated to "M"). In each book there were a number of pronominal constructions which could be called fully reflexive, where quite obviously subject does something to subject.

(1) In congratulating industry on its progress towards revitalization, De Gaulle said: "...sans protectionnisme et sans inflation elle est capable de se transformer..." (A 77, Radio and TV speech 1965).

(2) In a scientific report a virus is said to be an incomplete being because: "...il ne peut se reproduire (i.e. copy itself) que s'il est incorporé à une cellule vivante." (A 142).

(3) Mauriac's principal character, in a reflective mood, takes a good look at himself: "...la bougie levée devant la glace, il se contemplait." (M 92).

(4) This character's mother, the Génitrix of the title, had done something wrong, but was trying to persuade herself that what she had done was right: "Elle allait et venait dans la pièce, parlant pour se convaincre soi-même autant que son fils." (M 99).

In all of these examples, and in many more throughout the texts, the view presented is very similar to the view of a transitive active verb. The subject, support of causative incidence, is seen directing the effective incidence of the sémantèse towards a support. Both supports, in both cases, can be analysed as objects of the sémantèse, but whereas in the active voice causative and effective supports are different, in the pronominal voice, these supports are the same. Thus, industry transforms itself, a virus cannot reproduce itself, Fernand contemplates himself, and Félicité tries to convince herself. In every case, a distinctly analysable effective incidence seeks its support in the very support of causative incidence. The relation is transparent here, with subject acting upon itself as object.

It might be expected that this type of straightforward

construction would constitute the great majority of instances of middle voice. But in Ager's book, where 148 different pronominals were noted, only fifteen could be said to be full reflexives, in the sense of having subject as fully agent and patient of the process. Only 10% of the 'reflexives' were true reflexives; the other 90% clearly had other values. In Mauriac's book, where every pronominal in 100 pages was noted, full reflexives accounted for only 32 out of 248 pronominal constructions, or 13%, and if one discounts 'se dire' and 'se répéter', each of which occurs seven times, and whose repeated use can be attributed to the characters' introverted habits of voicing their thoughts to themselves, then the proportion drops to 18 out of 248, or 7.3%.

What this clearly indicates is that the reflexive value of the pronominal does not occur nearly as frequently as writers of school texts would have their students believe. The situation in which the subject is obviously conscious agent of an action he knowingly performs on himself just does not occur very frequently in real life. And while pronominal voice is eminently suited to express this aspect of the middle diathesis, we cannot conclude that the main function of the pronominal is to denote reflexivity.

It might be worthwhile asking whether the reverse is true: can reflexivity be expressed without the pronominal? A prefix often used for the idea of 'self' or 'by it (him)(her)self' is "auto-", as in "automobile". In conjunction with an adjective, it is quite common: self-adjusting brakes in cars are "auto-

réglables". So it is conceivable that a verb incorporating this prefix could express a reflexive notion by itself, with no need of anything else to indicate the identity of subject and object. However, the following example from the editorial of Le Devoir seems to contradict this conception:

(5) "A force d'affirmer contre vents et marées que les jeux de Montréal s'auto-financeront, l'équipe du COJO s'est enfermée dans une peu rassurante alternative...." (Le Devoir, 20.12.73: 4).

It seems that, for the purpose of expressing reflexivity, the element 'auto-' is not sufficient, whereas the pronoun is necessary. The pronoun is the indispensable support of effective incidence, and the prefix is simply an expressive, stylistic device, which adds nothing but emphasis to the alternative construction (in a reflexive sense), "les jeux se financeront".

Reciprocal

Another value of the middle voice which is given much attention in grammars is the reciprocal value. This special case of reflexivity, in which each member of a plural subject performs actions on the other members of that subject, is illustrated in the following examples:

(6) "Par la suite, les deux hommes devaient se rencontrer pour se rendre ensuite au restaurant Klondike Steak House..." (Le Devoir, 20.12.73: 3).

That is, A was to meet B in the same process by which B was to meet A.

(7) "...sur la carte-album, Félicité et le fils s'épanouissaient de face, tandis que la jeune femme, au second plan, les mains pendantes, ne souriait pas." (M 71).

In the story, Fernand's young wife fails to break him away from his mother's suffocating domination; the use here of a reciprocal construction with a double, not triple, subject, captures perfectly the relationship between mother and son which excludes any, like Mathilde, who attempt to intrude.

(8) "Des astronautes s'élancent à la conquête des planètes, et nous nous divisons sur la laïcité!"(A 28 - Le Figaro, 18 June 1965).

The reciprocal here serves to underline a contrast which the author of this article, criticising France's lack of progress, is seeking to establish. The problem as he sees it is that France is too inward-looking in comparison with other countries. Others have visions ranging beyond their frontiers, but France's preoccupations are all internal. There are disputes which pit one Frenchman against another. The store of national energy which the French are free to spend, is spent on each other, so that each Frenchman is both agent and patient of useless fighting. The reciprocal then, as a grammatical feature of the sentence, serves a stylistic function as well: the syntactic relationship of subject and reflexive pronoun mirrors the aggressive relationships of the French towards each other.

The same passage provides an example of a pronominal construction with a special prefix denoting reciprocity.

(9) "...nos vieux partis continuent, dans l'impuissance, à s'entredéchirer...."(A 28)

(i.e. to tear each other to pieces). Here again the reciprocal expresses the sort of introverted activity which the author deplores. The violence is turned inward, and just as the

limits of the violence are contained within the borders of France, the limits of the verbal process are contained within the same grammatical subject. Many other similar verbs can be found in the dictionary: s'entr'aider (help one another), s'entre-choquer (rattle, clink against one another - said of bottles, for instance), s'entrobliger (be of service to one another), s'entre-égorger (tear at each other's throats), s'entre-détruire (destroy each other), etc. This prefix would seem at first to be sufficient for the expression of a reciprocal relation. "...Even before the meaning of the sémantèse is known, and independently from the participants in the process, entre underlines the fact that the process must take place between two limits....Entr'aimer, before even speaking of love (aimer), speaks of interaction, and indicates that the subjects are in a process whose limits, start and finish, are interchangeable." (Stéfanini 1962: 446 tr.). But the productivity of this prefix is restricted; no more than two dozen similarly prefixed verbs can be found in the dictionary. Moreover, all of the above notions can be expressed in other ways.

(10) Les bouteilles s'entre-choquaient,

could be expressed:

(11) Les bouteilles se choquaient l'une contre l'autre.

and the example (9) could be replaced by "....à se déchirer l'un l'autre" or "...à se déchirer mutuellement." The constant feature of these reciprocal constructions is se, because the important idea to express is the fact that the subject is both

agent and patient of the process. The prefix entre would seem to be only a more expressive way of denoting reciprocity. It is not essential, and the same referential meaning can be conveyed using separate complements, always in conjunction with the marker of middle voice, the reflexive pronoun.[1]

In the texts examined, the reciprocal pronominal was noticeably rare. Only two verbs out of 148 in AGER were reciprocal, and just four out of 248 verbs in Mauriac's novel. Three of these are in just one paragraph, in which the author is emphasizing the mutual, morbidly-doting affection of mother and son in a scene where his young wife is being rigorously and systematically excluded from her place within the family. At one point, when the mother was lounging with her head on her son's shoulder and both were very cosy with each other, Mathilde suddenly enters the room:

(12) "...en un brusque recul ils se séparaient, affectaient de s'interrompre au milieu d'un mot..... 'Je vous dérange? - Mais non, mais non. Nous avons dit ce que nous avions à nous dire.'" (M 70).

These examples aside, as well as the one quoted in (7), Mauriac uses no other reciprocal constructions in one hundred pages of text. It appears that both reciprocity and reflexivity are notions which are relatively uncommon in normal use. The vector which represents the range of values of middle voice is only

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[1] "Ainsi le pronominal composé (avec entre-) qui paraissait devoir élargir et accroître les possibilités syntaxiques de la voix, se révèle, dans l'immense majorité des cas, un doublet expressif de la forme simple, et point n'est besoin de les distinguer, pour étudier les rapports de la diathèse moyenne et de l'effet de sens réciproque." (Stéfanini 1962: 464).

rarely intercepted near x, the point at which the pronominal's value is very close to that of an active voice verb.

One linguist who believes that the reflexive/reciprocal value of the pronominal voice is not its main one is Tesnière. In his theory of the verb, a given verb has a certain valency, according to the number of actants, or participants in the process, it will admit. Thus, "je meurs" is monovalent, while "je lève la table" is bivalent (Tesnière uses divalent), since lever admits a direct object. An explicit factitive construction adds another actant to the process, as in "Il[1] me[3] fait lever la table[2]," and this construction constitutes a voice (voix factitive). The voice contrasting with this one is called recessive voice (voix récessive), and its function is to reduce by one the valency of the verb. The recessive marker is the reflexive pronoun, which is apparently the second actant in the process, but virtually the same as the prime actant because of its anaphoric reference. Thus a distinction is established between true reflexives and recessives. The clown in the circus may seem to perform the impossible by lifting himself off the ground by his hair. If someone exclaims: "Il se lève!", the verb in this case is the normal two-actant lever, used reflexively.. But in "Je me lève le matin," the verb lever is really just a one-actant verb, the reflexive pronoun indicating that the second actant which 'normally' enters the construction is not a participant in this instance.[2]

[2] "Quand au contraire on est assis et qu'on se lève, au sens courant de cette expression, il n'y a aucune idée réfléchie et le verbe est simplement à la voix récessive....le se y est seulement le marquant de la voix récessive et...son rôle est seulement de permettre d'employer le verbe divalent lever en valeur de verbe monovalent." (Tesnière 1969: 273).

The problem with this interpretation is similar to that of the transformationalists' approach. In both cases, a distinction is made within a unified morphological system solely on the basis of meaning. Tesnière creates two categories in which the same pronoun se is meant to act either as the second actant or as a marker indicating that no second actant exists! He admits himself that the "nuance separating réfléchi and récessif is subtle," (Tesnière 1969; 273 tr.) and that it is hard to determine if the reflexive verb has lost its reflexive value. The distinction is probably impossible to make systematically on a satisfactory basis, and to thus establish two separate voices for one verb form with only vague semantic boundaries between them is clearly a dubious undertaking.

Middle

The value in Tesnière's observations is that he recognises that many, if not most, uses of the pronominal verb do not convey a reflexive sense. Just what these uses do convey has been the subject of some discussion. Fehr (1933) lists the various values of the Greek middle voice, which generally imply a more or less intense 'interest' in the action on the part of the subject, and tries to find the equivalent to these values in French. He finds that some, though not all, of these values are conveyed by the pronominal form. For Grevisse (1964), those pronominals which are not used in a reflexive sense are called "subjective". Their pronoun is virtually prefixed to the verb

or incorporated into it, and serves only to give a vague or affective or emphatic value to the verb. It does not stand as object, and is used simply to underline the personal activity of the subject or to denote a particular interest which this subject has in the action. He further states that the conjoined pronoun is a sort of inflected particle, a "reflect" of the subject, and must not be distinguished from the verbal form in verbs like s'apercevoir de, se moquer, se mourir, etc. (Grevisse 1964: 539 tr.).

The vagueness of this definition of the role of the non-reflexive pronominal means that it is of little use. It seems to be simply an attempt to reconcile the presence of a pronoun having anaphoric reference to the subject with the fact that the relation between subject and reflexive pronoun is often not analysable in terms of subject and object. Thus, to say that the reflexive pronoun is the marker of some affective value or of some special interest in the action, explains nothing about the underlying structure of middle voice. On the other hand, to say that the reflexive pronoun signals that the subject is both agent and patient of the process, does explain why affectivity, special interest, and many other values are expressed by the pronominal voice.

Movement. One notion often associated with the middle or non-reflexive pronominal is 'movement'. Twenty out of 148, or 13.5% of the examples from AGER, and fifty out of 248, or 20% of the examples from MAURIAC were found to express some idea of movement, and mainly by people and not by things like cars

or other vehicles. Movement is a physical activity in which we are aware of our own activity as agents, but we also undergo the consequences of the activity. The mind orders movement, the limbs obey. We move freely, directing our own path, but constant movement is tiring and we are forced to rest. At the extreme limit, the body may become totally passive; exhaustion as a result of the activity may enforce total inactivity in which the body's ever-present passivity has become complete. It is perhaps this awareness which makes the pronominal apt to express movement,[3] as in the following examples:

(13) A motorist involved in an accident says, in explaining his reaction: "J'ai été surpris par un vélomotoriste qui se déportait vers la gauche." (A 68). The cyclist was the agent of his own activity, but the consequence of his activity was motion which involved him as a partially patient participant.

(14) "Par ailleurs, le rythme cardiaque s'accélère ou, au contraire, se ralentit." (A 147).

The heart is not free to determine the tempo at which it beats. It seems to be free and independant, but it is not the seat of life and does not control itself. The verbs describing its movement are all the more apt then if they give some indication of this passivity mingled with activity.

(15) An announcement often heard in airports: "Les passagers sont priés de se rendre à la porte numéro 23."

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[3] "De même les verbes de mouvement ont si souvent, et dans tant de langues, la forme moyenne parce qu'ALLER, MARCHER, COURIR, sont des moyens privilégiés de connaissance de notre corps, sous son double aspect d'agent et de patient." (Stéfanini 1962: 118).

It is perhaps significant that aller, the nearest synonym to se rendre, is almost never used in such announcements. There is a sense of urgency and compulsion involved in going to catch a plane. The passengers are not asked to proceed of their own volition in their own time towards the aircraft, but are instead requested to conform to the exigencies of the timetable and to submit to the requirements of this form of activity. The passivity implicit in the nature of the movement expressed by se rendre reflects to a certain degree the constraints on the freedom of the travellers.

(16) "De marche en marche, elle perdait le souffle, mais tout de même se hissa jusqu'à la chambre de l'ingrat." (M.72)

The son has cut himself off from his mother, and she is forced to go to him. She is old and rheumatic, and so climbing the stairs is a struggle for her. The movement is an active one; she has consented to go of her own free and tenacious will. But her age and condition make her the victim of her will. She must fight actively against the passive resistance of her body. The verb indicates that she hauled herself up the stairs, and its synthesis of activity and passivity conveys the old lady's struggle with herself.

(17) "La vieille s'aplatit comme une bête..."

The old woman, overcome by the terror at the thought of having been abandoned by her son, collapses on a bed. The movement is involuntary, and is produced by her overwhelming sense of loss, and so even though she performs the action, she performs it as victim. Moreover, the very nature of s'aplatir forces the subject to make his body conform to a certain configuration.

Limbs, trunk and head must be made to assume a shape which is not natural, and the measure of obedience required from all parts of the body call for the use of a verb form indicating this degree of passivity.

There are very many more pronominals serving to denote movement in the texts examined. Movement of the body is expressed in Génitrix by, among others, s'assoupir, se dresser, se rasseoir, se promener, se lever, se tapir, se détacher, se glisser, se heurter, se pencher, se coucher, se précipiter, se traîner, se débattre, se retourner, and s'affaisser, all of which indicate the subject's awareness of its rôle both as agent and patient of the process in question.

Departure. A notion closely connected with that of movement is 'leaving' or 'departure'. In many Indo-European languages, according to Stéfanini, this idea is often expressed in middle-voice, despite large differences in mentality, civilisation and linguistic structure.[4] Thus Latin has proficiscor, Italian andarsene, Spanish irse, French s'en aller, as well as a number of slang terms, like se carapater, se casser, and s'esbigner which the dictionary gives as synonyms of s'en aller or s'enfuir.

In the process of departure, the movement is directional, away from a starting point towards some destination. The subject

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[4] "Ainsi le départ, très souvent et dans la plupart des langues indo-européennes est exprimé par un moyen, et malgré les différences profondes de mentalité, de civilisation et de structure linguistique, proficiscor, andarsene, s'en aller appartiennent à la même voix." (Stéfanini 1962: 115).

who freely chooses to direct himself to this destination is obliged to leave the starting point. There is thus a double notion involved in departure: one can leave actively, but on the other side of the coin, one is subjected to the necessity of making a move away.[5] This combination of freedom and necessity is captured when a pronominal verb is used to express the idea of departure.[6]

(18) "Les autres (terroristes), trois au moins, ont dû s'éclipser en profitant de la panique qui régnait à Fiumicino." (Le Devoir 20.12.73: 7).

These commandos, having hurled their fire-bombs into a jet, creating scenes of death and panic, were naturally anxious to get away. As active agents of the escape, they did their utmost to flee directly. But their costume and Arab features could easily identify them, and so they were obliged to make their departure as unobtrusive as possible. Because the subjects are constrained to a certain course of action, there is a strong element of passivity mixed with their activity. This is perhaps why, in this sentence, the reporter did not use partir, or some other non-pronominal verb, to indicate departure. The metaphor is an indication that a stylistic choice of verb was made; what is significant is that the verb is pronominal.

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[5] In a journey from A to B, "il est évident que tout sujet qui va librement à B est pris dans la nécessité de s'éloigner de A en même temps (sans quoi il ne pourra jamais aller à B)." (Hewson 1975/76).

[6] Just as it is captured when a resultative is used for the same idea. Partir presents a subject who is free in immanent time, while bound in transcendant time: je pars; je suis parti.

(19) "Lui qui avait été incapable de s'évader hors de soi-même, fût-ce dans la volupté, il comprenait trop tard que notre corps lui-même cherche, découvre son plaisir enfoui hors de lui...." (M 60).

The subject of this sentence is Fernand, who has just been shocked out of fifty years of doting on his mother and wriggling under her thumb, by the death of his young wife. The process of coming out of himself, unattempted until now, will run counter to all his ingrained patterns of thought and behaviour. He will himself try to force himself to become aware of the people and things around him, and in that sense is an agent, but he will also be bound by previous experience to remain introverted. Fernand is therefore both author and object of the escape, the escapee and the place of captivity. The combination within the subject of activity and passivity is conveyed by the used of the pronominal.

(20) "Et, ...elle ne veut pas que son mari s'en aille, bambocher de toute part...." (A 80 - De Gaulle, Press Conference, 15 December 1965).

De Gaulle uses s'en aller, one of the most common verbs indicating departure, for the idea of 'going off on a spree'. He does not use aller (aille) because he is contrasting 'stay-at-home' virtues with 'away-from-home' vices, and therefore needs a verb indicating direction away from a starting point. Aller can be used for direction towards something, but not for movement away. One can say: je vais au cinéma, but not *je vais du cinéma. In order to reverse the direction implied by aller, the pronoun en (whose underlying structure is de + something) is associated with the verb. The verb now has a bi-directional sense, and can become pronominal, indicating that the

subject who undertakes to depart from some place is bound to leave that place in moving towards another. The subject's movement is regulated by the necessity of leaving behind his starting point and, thus limited in his freedom to act by the very nature of the activity, he partly becomes a patient.[7]

Change of State. The role of en-, associated with or attached to other middle voice verbs seems to be very important, especially in connection with the notion of 'change of state', or 'entry into a state'. This notion lends itself readily to expression by middle voice forms. One is most aware of one's status as patient of a process during a period of change from one state (or way of behaviour, or position, or surroundings, or size, etc.) to another.

(21) "Il gagna sa chambre et se déshabilla à tâtons, s'endormit tandis que sa mère soufflait aussi la bougie...." (M 61).

The preverbal en- gives reference to the initial or inceptive threshold of the activity, which the sémantèse of dormir

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[7] cf. Hewson 1975/76: "Si l'on veut se servir de la notion de aller pour indiquer un départ, donc, des ajustements sont nécessaires. On ajoute d'abord le pronom en pour indiquer l'idée d'éloignement, ce qui donne au verbe un sens bi-directionel (aller = à, en = de)....Il semble donc que, si l'on veut se servir du verbe aller pour indiquer l'éloignement, il faut représenter le sujet pris par les conséquences de son action, et la voix moyenne (avec sa sémiologie pronominale) devient nécessaire." (Hewson 1975/76). cf. also Molho's: "Pour obtenir le verbe moyen, il faut au préalable que le pronom-adverbe ait inversé l'orientation cinétique de l'actif pour le rendre adéquat à la diathèse: une fois l'inversion opérée par en, la voix associe sa rétrospectivité à celle du pronom inverseur pour indiquer que l'efférence aperçue, irréversible, s'inscrit au bénéfice du sujet patient, qui l'assume et la subit. On conçoit, dans ces conditions, que l'inverseur et le pronom aient tendu en français à s'indissocier pour former avec le verbe une unité sémantique (s'en aller) opposable à l'actif aller, rebelle en soi au moyen." (Molho 1965: 194-195).

ignores. Thus the notion of movement by the subject, represented by se, and the notion of beginning to sleep, and thus of entry into a new state, are combined, and together indicate necessary and passive movement away from the waking state. The reflexive pronoun shows how the change of state is both active and passive. The subject seeks sleep, but sleep has to come to him.

(22) "Pourtant son bras s'engourdissait sous le poids de cette tête lourde." (M 101).

The feeling of 'pins and needles' gradually overcomes the limb as circulation is cut off, but the subject is in a passive position, as a result of which the feeling is imposed on the arm. The arm both produces its own pain and feels its effects, hence the middle voice form of the verb.

A great many other pronominals with preverbal en- (or em-) can be found in French indicating a change of state:

a) s'enamourer - to fall in love. The subjects of this activity often claim that 'they couldn't help themselves', that without any conscious effort they somehow ended up in love. As passive participants in a process which overwhelms the individual ('This is bigger than the both of us, baby!'), and which at the same time involves certain specialized types of activity, the subjects are simultaneously agents and patients.

b) s'emporter - to lose one's temper. The subject is victim of his own emotions as he enters a state of uncontrolled fury.

c) s'embourber - to get stuck in mud. The nature of this activity is that the more one struggles to get free, the deeper one gets trapped. More activity implies a more serious state of passivity. (cf. also s'emplir - "la cuisine s'emplit de nuit"

(M 116), s'enfler - "...Fernand Cazenave sentait naître, s'enfler en lui la vague furieuse" (M 153), s'embrouiller, s'engager, s'enfoncer, s'enliser, etc.).

The role of en with s'en tenir à merits some investigation. The verb tenir itself implies no movement, but with à, as in:

(23) Je tiens à vous remercier de votre hospitalité.

there is an emotion directed outward from the speaker towards someone else. The movement implied is from the subject to the outside, and the direction of the movement is marked by à. If, however, the pronoun en is added, there is an indication of movement in the other direction, since en = de. The net effect of *en tenir à is that of two equal forces pulling in opposite directions, resulting in a dynamic immobility, or a considered absence of movement. The pronominal form reflects this deliberate lack of movement as the proportion of passivity inherent in all pronominal forms. It is a sort of passivity intentionally assumed. This is why s'en tenir à can express stubbornness or resistance on the part of the subject.

(24) "...le syndicat aurait décidé de s'en tenir à ses exigences initiales." (Le Devoir 20.12.73: 20).

The intransigence of some unions at the bargaining table is legendary; decisions are often made to do nothing. Active refusal to move constitutes a passive state.

(25) "Il ne s'en tint plus à des propos indifférents, mais toutes ses paroles témoignaient d'un travail secret en lui, de curiosités inattendues." (M 113).

Up to this point in the story, the subject (Fernand) had been deliberately witholding communication from his mother. His

resistance to her, in the form of offhand "propos indifférents" is mirrored by the voice of the verb. The firmness of his decision to withdraw from her is signalled by the reflexive pronoun.

Another verb in which the role of en is not immediately obvious is s'en venir. (According to some, this verb does not figure in standard French, and the Robert dictionary labels it vieux ou régional. Nonetheless, it has been used in literature by Maupassant ("Un homme...qui s'en venait à petits pas.") and is in everyday use throughout Québec.)

Venir itself implies motion but does not specify its direction, and so one can say Je viens à Paris and Je viens de Paris. No idea of departure is implied, simply an idea of directed movement. The addition of en entails the notion of a starting point, hence a departure. And since the activity of departure involves the obligation to move away from the starting point, and therefore the partial passivity of the subject, the verb form is middle. Je m'en viens means that I am freely coming, but that in doing so I am bound to come away from where I was.

There are many pronominal verbs not formed with en which also indicate a change of state.

(26) "Le cétène..., très instable, se polymérise rapidement...." (A 155 - from a chemistry text).

The change of state referred to here is that of a runny liquid to a nearly solid viscous substance. It is the chemical which changes, but under certain conditions imposed on it (i.e. a drop

in temperature from 800°C to -15°C), and to this extent undergoes rather than initiates the change it produces in itself. The non-pronominal form polymérise could conceivably have been used here, but would not have indicated the passive nature of the process.

(27) "Sa vue se troubla." (M 74).

The notion is almost entirely passive here; eyesight does not become blurred at will. But the verb does not assume a passive periphrastic form because a degree of activity is involved in the process. It is the old lady of Mauriac's novel whose sight is troubled during a bout of intense apprehension as she steals unnoticed into her son's room. Her activity causes strong emotion, whose effect heightens her blood pressure and blurs her vision. The proportion of activity to passivity in this process is very low, but the presence of even a small amount of activity is sufficient to prompt the use of middle voice.

(28) "Pour mieux me tenir, tu n'as pas voulu que je me marie." (M 36).

The change is from the single to the married state. The subject enters it voluntarily (hopefully), but not without the aid of a third party, a representative of religion or society. The wedding ceremony is one in which bride and groom do not play a predominantly active role; no matter how "personalized" the ritual, its essential feature is the blessing or approval of the community which is received passively by the couple. A person both marries and is married at the same time, and is thus both partly agent and partly patient of the process.

(29) "...la flicaille spécialisée s'embusque dans les campagnes en quête des distillateurs clandestins." (Le Devoir 20.12.73: 1).

The state entered is that of concealment. In order to remain unseen, the special squad is forced to submit to certain requirements to ensure a low profile. This obligation to take certain camouflaging measures, and by doing so, to submit to them, makes the police passive participants of their own activity, and the awareness of this passive position is what calls for the middle voice form.

Beginning of Action. A type of change of state verb often found in middle voice is that expressing the beginning of an action, because there is a change involved in going from non-activity to activity. Unlike most 'change of state' verbs, in which the pronominal form seems to be in response to an awareness of a measure of passivity within the subject, the 'beginning of action' verbs are pronominal because of an awareness that the subject is active as well as passive.

(30) "...Crauste se mit lui-meme à déclencher et à accélérer les mouvements." (A 33, from a report of a rugby match).

In an otherwise inactive and lacklustre offense, Crauste's aggressiveness creates effective attacks. The inertness of the French team was changed by Crauste's sudden upsurge of activity. The new effort or forcing will of course entail submitting to the effort, because forcing can be done only when the active subject agrees to suffer or submit to the effort involved in his activity. This entry then into an active role which implies a degree of passive submission to the consequences is signalled by the reflexive pronoun.

(31) "...il aurait fallu s'attaquer moins à la demande globale qu'aux origines précises du mal..." (A 50 Newspaper article).

The topic is inflation, and the writer is complaining that after years of non-intervention in the economy, the government has chosen the wrong target for its policies. The notion of 'coming to grips with' or 'grappling with' implies a change from inactivity to activity, the nature of which is interaction and acceptance of feedback as problems are attacked. The change from a patient role to a role of simultaneous activity and passivity makes the pronominal form the only one possible here.

(32) "Cette vieille femme se meurt de ne plus posséder son fils..." (M 72).

Mauriac could have used mourir here; if he did not, there is likely to be a very good reason. In commenting on the difference between the two verbs, Damourette and Pichon observed a notion of duration associated with se mourir, which signifies "being in the process of dying," and represents not just the fact, but the agony, of death.[8] If this idea of duration is indeed a feature of se mourir, then it is due to the structure of middle voice: the process of dying will naturally be prolonged if the victim, instead of submitting passively to death, struggles actively against it. This interpretation may be justifiable because of the unfixed and non-rigid role of the reflexive pronoun in indicating agent and patient. It was pointed out earlier, in chapter three, that the pronoun's function was to indicate the role contrasting to the subject's active or

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[8] "La différence sémantique entre l'actif et le réfléchi est très nette. Se mourir a en propre une nuance durative; il signifie 'être occupé à mourir'. Beaucoup plus que la mort, il représente l'agonie." (Damourette et Pichon, 1911-36: 761).

passive role in the process. If, in the process mourir, the subject is passive, then the reflexive particle, instead of increasing the inherent passive element in the sémantèse, could conceivably indicate the active element. Hence, in certain contexts, the durative value is achieved. The old woman here, however, is bringing an early death on herself by pining and lamenting over the son's loss of affection for her. In this case, death is invited. Félicité Cazenave is the agent of her own exile from life because she is working to impose the eventual passive state of dying and death upon herself.[9]

Attributive Function. A particular function often associated with middle voice is the attributive function, in which the pronominal seems to act like a copula verb in linking the subject with an attributive adjective or noun. Examples:

(33) "Le Français Jean Garaiable s'est classé septième avec 288 points." (A 34).

(34) "Attendu que JOLY ayant été déféré devant le Tribunal de Police de X, la Caisse Populaire se constitua partie civile et réclama..." (A 67).

(35) "...dix-neuf se montrèrent positifs." (A 142).

(36) "...si le marché se trouvait saturé, les pièces prendraient moins de valeur..." (Le Devoir, 20.12.73: 2).

(37) "M. R.L.... qui se prétend investi d'un don de guérisseur..." (Le Devoir, 20.12.73: 14).

(38) "Se sachant trahie déjà dans le coeur de son fils..." (M 77).

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[9] "Se mourir, c'est aller à la mort en même temps que la mort vient à vous." (Stéfanini 1962: 117).

The pronominal in these sentences is more than just a convenient and more elegant way of saying *dix-neuf montrèrent qu'ils étaient positifs or *Sachant qu'elle avait été trahie déjà..., etc. The reason for the use of middle voice forms to express attribution is that the qualification of the subject limits him in some way. In a sentence like:

(39) "...le Premier Juge se déclarait par voie de conséquence incompétent pour statuer sur la demande..." (A-67)

the adjective 'incompétent' contrasts with any one of the many hundreds of adjectives which could have occurred in a similar position. The judge however, by his own words and therefore by his own activity, declared himself unable to make a judgement in this case, and thus restricted his own freedom to act. The process of attribution is an indication that the person or thing qualified is in the state denoted by the adjective, and being in a state implies passivity. And so, while in (39) the judge is agent of the declaration, he also takes note of his own passive role in the state of being "incompétent". The awareness of being a patient coincides with his action, and the verb is therefore in middle voice. A judge could declare another judge incompetent, but the verb would not be pronominal. But when that incompetence is declared of the subject, the limit of tension of the verb is clearly announced to be internal. The adjective is a qualification of that limit, and serves as a reminder of the subject's passivity in the process initiated by him.

Verbs indicating mental or emotional activity. This class of verbs constitutes 55 out of 248, or 22½% of all examples in the novel by Mauriac, and thus represents a significant proportion of middle voice verbs: The mind, as seat of intellectual and emotional processes, is the part of the body over which we have the least control. It is estimated that over 90% of the brain's potential power is untapped, and psychologists have evidence of forces within the mind which we know very little about. If mental activity is what ennobles man and raises him above the level of the beast, there is still much of mental activity which goes on without any awareness of it on our part. The mind is the ultimate control not only of our physical actions but also of our thoughts and feelings, and the role played by the human will in governing the process of the mind is only partial. Little wonder then that so many verbs in French expressing mental activity are found in middle voice. Their form is an acknowledgement that the subject of a particular thought or feeling is not the totally free agent of the action, and that this subject is in fact partially made to undergo the thought or feeling as a patient.

(40) "Attendu que la Cour se rendra aisément compte de l'inattention flagrante de cet automobiliste." (A 67 - Notes from an appeal court).

The act of realizing something is not one which is entirely actively performed. A court may deliberate for a long time and seek to assess the gravity of a given act, or an inventor may suddenly seize on the right solution to his problem in a flash, but in both cases, 'realization' is something which

just appears in the mind. (I realized = It came to me). The subject of such an act is not free to control its appearance; unknown conditions within him and outside of him determine whether there will be 'realization' or not. The freedom to realize some fact is not total, and so the subject is constrained by the limitations of his own mental capacities. The process thus performed by a subject who is both patient and agent is expressed in middle voice.

(41) "...nous sommes un peuple très vivant, en plein essor de progrès, mais s'obligeant lui-même à avancer en bon ordre..." (A 77: De Gaulle, Radio and TV speech, 31 December 1965).

If s'obliger is used here, it is because the act presupposes resistance on the part of the subject. The pronominal form indicates the activity required by the subject to liberate himself from old patterns of behaviour. (For De Gaulle, this old order is summed up in one word: la pagaille.) A subject who has to s'obliger is therefore not totally free to act, and must as well submit to his own efforts, hence middle voice. In a hockey match:

(42) "...les occasions de s'impatienter ne manquent pas." (Le Devoir 20.12.73: 4).

Impatience can be a general feature of a person's temperament, the result of a bad mood, or the reaction to provocation. Its appearance is not entirely regulated by the application of will-power, and so a person who becomes impatient is not fully an agent of the process (- and obviously not fully 'patient' either!).

(43) "La vieille hésite,...se ravise, tourne le loquet." (M 44).

The process of changing one's mind is limited by the range of alternatives offered. And often people cannot explain why they changed their mind, in which case they undergo a change over which they have no rational control and are bound by whatever forces produce the change. Changing one's mind, on the other hand, can also be perfectly rational. But one is then a changed person as a result of this activity, and so the process is partly passive.

(44) "En vain voulut-il se remémorer toutes les circonstances où il lui avait montré quelque douceur." (M 68).

It seems that the human brain registers all its perceptions, but for most people the great majority of these are unaccessible. For Fernand to remember all the occasions on which he had been kind to his wife is an impossible task. There are limits on his powers of recall determined by the quality of his memory. The humanly impossible feat of absolutely total recall could be expressed by Il remémore tout, but ordinary people must be content with Il se remémore tout ce qu'il peut. The subject engaged in an attempt to remember is never a free agent.[10]

(45) "Mathilde s'étonnait de trouver à ces médianoches un délassement amer." (M 31).

Surprise is not something wilfully self-imposed; it is an uncontrolled reaction to some outside circumstance. The subject registering surprise is in a passive position and obliged to act

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[10] cf. Hewson's observation on why se souvenir is in middle voice: "La liberté de l'agent est limitée à ce que la mémoire lui permet." (Hewson 1975/76), and "the subject is trying to make himself the receiver (in the conscious mind) of activity that he initiates in the subconscious." (Hewson, Personal Communication).

without his consent. His liberty to act is curtailed by events which have nothing to do with his conscious control.

Many other verbs expressing emotional or mental activity were found in the texts examined, amongst which were: se sentir, se soucier, se contenter, se résigner, s'aviser, s'assurer, se rappeler, se complaire, s'intéresser, se consoler, se méfier, se persuader, se reprocher, se gêner, se moquer, s'adjuger, se douter, se plaindre, s'inquiéter, se demander, s'enchanter and se garder. All of them show the subject as less than complete master of the process in which he is involved, because the nature of such activity precludes full control over it.

Impersonals. In the 'pluri-personal' pronominal, the active element is generally associated with the subject noun or pronoun, and the passive element with the reflexive pronoun. But in the unipersonal or impersonal use of the verb, there is no question of any activity taking place on the part of the subject il, because this il is IL_1 (see Chapter One), the universal person identified with the sémantèse in order to make it verbal. The next stage in the evolution of a verb is generally to IL_2, human person, and thence to je, tu, etc. But some sémantèses, like il faut, do not evolve beyond the first stage of grammaticalization through the universal person. The il of il faut never refers to a particular person; its reference is to the universal person. It is therefore surprising to see sentences like the following:

(46) "On ignore si le commandant de bord a été gêné par une mauvaise visibilité ou s'il s'est produit une erreur dans les données du radar." (Le Devoir, 20.12.73: 11).

(47) "...et il s'ensuit que l'indice industriel a perdu une bonne partie du terrain qu'il avait gagné plus tôt dans la séance." (Le Devoir 20.12.73: 19).

(48) "Cette année, il s'en est vendu au-delà de 3,500,000 bouteilles (de Beefeater Gin) au Québec." (Le Devoir, 20.12.73: 11).

If the subject is the universal person, then neither activity nor passivity is involved. The event is considered in and by itself without reference to the human person, and so the presence of a reflexive pronoun, which normally operates as an indication of a measure of passivity in an otherwise active subject, has to be explained.

The explanation is perhaps that, for the purposes of simply evoking an event, there are some sémantèses, like il faut, which do not imply any author of the event. Other sémantèses however are most often used pluripersonally, so that any attempt to use them to suggest only an event automatically entails a human person as agent in the mind of the speaker. But this degree of agency attached to any use of these verbs can be nullified by the addition of the reflexive pronoun. The notion of passivity it implies counterbalances the idea of agency associated with the sémantèse which is normally conjugated with the human person, and the net result is the elimination of any notion of human subject, whether active or passive.[11] For example:

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11 "Ainsi les verbes faire, produire, passer, trouver, pensés d'abord comme référables à la personne humaine, sont convertis à la personne d'univers par la déplétion de leur inceptum opératif et implétion de leur conclusus résultatif - c'est-à-dire par leur mise à la voix moyenne, de forme pronominale: il se fait, il se produit, il se passe, il se trouve. Suggérer une action sans acteur, une production sans producteur ...: autant de façons de suggérer l'événement à l'état pur, c'est-à-dire quelque chose de simplement fait, produit, passé, trouvé, abstraction faite de tout agent." (Moignet 1971: 276).

(49) "Il s'agit de capter l'imagination des Français pour la nourrir d'exaltation patriotique." (A 31 - Editorial from l'Express by J.J.S.S.).

The verb agir - to act, presupposes an actor, and therefore a human person. In order to suggest an action verbally without implying an agent, the presupposition of an agent must be eliminated. This is accomplished through the presence of se, which serves to delete any notion of human agency in the process.

(50) "Si le jeu en vaut la chandelle...autant le jouer comme il se doit." (Le Maclean, May 1975: 41).

Devoir is most equally used to indicate necessary potential action by a human person. In the pronominal form the human presence is lost, and with the universal person as subject, il se doit conveys an abstract notion of necessary potential action applicable to everyone.

(51) "Il se pense toujours bien plus de choses qu'il ne s'en dit." (Grevisse 1964: 542 - E.Henriot, Au bord du temps: 1).

Both penser and dire are eminently human activities. To abstract the notions of thinking and speaking from the people who are necessary for the act to be performed, the reflexive pronoun is used as a passive marker, to block any possibility of an agent role for the subject il.

Passive Values

Because middle voice forms in French permit the expression of any proportion of activity and passivity combined in a subject, it is not surprising that some pronominals convey

a markedly passive sense. The reduction of the share of activity in a given process increases the share of passivity so that, for all practical purposes, the subject is considered to be a patient. This passive value is the result of intercepting the vector representing the range of possibilities of middle voice so close to the boundary of passive voice as to assume a value indistinguishable from that of a passive periphrastic construction. If grammarians have been traditionally at a loss to explain these values, it is perhaps because they considered them superfluous or redundant, given that French already possesses a complete series of periphrastic passive constructions. It appears unnecessary to express the same logical category of 'subject NOT agent' by two completely different verbal forms.[12]

But are the two constructions entirely synonymous? Is it correct to say that

(52) Ces choses se font tous les jours. and:

(53) Ces choses sont faites tous les jours.

convey exactly the same impression? It is true that in both sentences the subject is patient of the process, and yet the pronominal passive conveys a slightly different meaning from the periphrastic passive verb.

The difference is because in the periphrastic construction, the semantic content of the verb is expressed by the past

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[12] "Si les grammariens semblent surpris de pareils emplois, c'est sans doute qu'ils considèrent que le français possédant une conjugaison spécialisée, une série complète de périphrases passives, n'avait pas besoin d'autre moyen d'expression de la même catégorie logique." (Stéfanini 1962:124).

participle. The notion associated with this part of the verb is perfective. The view of the process is an afterview, a view of a completed process. The past participle signifies that the limit of verbal tension has been crossed, that the verb has expended its potential and must be revivified, given new life, by the auxiliary être. And so Ces choses sont faites presents a process which has been accomplished. The action is seen, not in progress, but in completion.

The first construction however presents the process in immanent time. The present tense in French encompasses both incidence and decadence in its presentation of the image of time, since the present is always a two-part moment, composed of what has been and what is to be. The limit of verbal tension is not crossed, and so the view offered is one of on-going action, action having its origins in the past and extending through the instant of now into the near future. The present is capable of presenting a process whose internal limit of tension has been reached but not crossed, giving an 'afferent' or forview of the action, in contrast to the 'efferent' or afterview of the same action given by the periphrastic construction.[13]

Possibility. Accordingly, certain notions which cannot be expressed adequately because of the decadent, or downstream,

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13 "...en toute forme pronominale la limite intérieure de tension est atteinte et saisie dans son immédiate antécédence, alors que dans un passif périphrastique, ladite limite, continûment et définitivement franchie...est saisie dans son immédiate subséquence." (Molho 1965: 197).

view of time implicit in the past participle, can be expressed by the pronominal in the present tense. One of these notions is 'possibility'.

(54) "Sa cinquième place s'explique donc mieux que la troisième prise au 200 mètres..." (A 37-38 Sports report).

This sentence concerns a runner who finished unexpectedly poorly in a race. The reporter however points out a cause for the poor finish, and so here, s'explique can be paraphrased as peut être expliquée.

(55) "...en ces matières, le temps perdu ne se rattrape que bien difficilement." (A 46: Financial report).

The article from which this is taken concerns the lag in investment in French industry, and the need to catch up to the level of other countries. If the periphrastic construction had been used here, the idea of potential and possible "catching-up' would not have been clear, and would likely have to be made explicit through the use of pouvoir.

(56) "Si doux qu'il (= Beefeater Gin) se prend pur." (Le Devoir 11).

The periphrastic est pris would give the impression that this brand of gin is always drunk straight. To avoid the wrath of tonic water manufacturers therefore, the pronominal form is used, because of its ability to suggest the option of taking this gin straight.

Repeated Action: Another notion often associated with the pronominal passive is 'repeated' or 'habitual' action.

(57) "...une salle excitée par un signal sinusoïdal... s'amortit exponentiellement sur cette fréquence propre, et ne s'amortit que sur cette fréquence..." (A 160: Report on the acoustics of a theatre).

The sentence is from a report of an experiment to determine the acoustic properties of a theatre. A series of observations shows that every time certain sounds are made under given conditions, the sound is dampened at a certain frequency by the qualities of the hall. The pronominal s'amortir which does not present an afterview of the process in decadence, but shows it as on-going, is therefore apt to express the idea of repeated dampening each time the necessary conditions are met.

(58) "Ils (= les billets de la loterie olympique) s'enlèvent si rapidement que nous devons envisager l'éventualité d'une deuxième émission de 2.5 millions..." (Le Devoir 3).

(59) "Le disque se vend, paraît-il, comme des petits pains chauds." (Le Devoir 12).

In both these sentences, there is the notion of things being bought by a great number of buyers, so the process of selling is constantly being repeated. The pronominal form permits the process to be viewed again and again, because the limit of verbal tension is seen as being repeatedly reached but not crossed.

Duration. A third notion which the pronominal passive often conveys because of the underlying structure of the present tense is 'duration'. Since the present includes both past and future, a process expressed in the present can appear to be unbounded by a beginning or an end. A passive expressed pronominally can therefore have overtones of duration which the periphrastic construction does not have unless modified by complements like 'continûment' or 'toujours'.

(60) "...les cavernes où s'abrite l'aviation helvétique." (A 24).

(61) "...le mouvement revendicatif...se poursuit sans relâche depuis sept semaines." (A 18).

(62) "Ce principe s'applique à la France qui a le droit de disposer d'elle-même..."(A 86).

In these sentences the process is considered in progress. The view is internal, and no limit is fixed to determine when the process will finish. The action is seen as imperfective and is therefore viewed in terms of its duration.

Se Voir. The passive value of the pronominal verbs discussed above results from treating as subject an element of the sentence which would be direct object in a sentence using a transitive active verb. It might well be asked whether any other elements of the sentence can be so promoted.

The Le Bidois tell of an occasion at the convocation ceremonies of a Canadian university, at which a "prince de race anglaise" received a cap and staff as symbols of some honorary title being granted to him. In his speech of thanks, he committed this blunder:

"Je suis heureux d'être donné ce chapeau et cette canne." (Le Bidois 1968).

This mistake, typical of English speakers, illustrates one of the basic structural differences between the two languages. An indirect or secondary object can be promoted to subject of a passive verb in English, but the same object cannot be subject of a passive periphrastic construction in French.

However, there is a construction whose subject is a promoted indirect object, in the sense that if a 'synonymous' sentence were constructed with 'on', the former subject would become

an indirect object. This construction, illustrated in the following sentence, uses se voir as a sort of passive auxiliary.[14]

(63) "M. Bouganine se serait vu suggérer de prendre sa retraite." (Price 1971: 236).

With 'on' as subject, we have:

(64) "On aurait suggéré à M. Boulganine de prendre sa retraite."

Price (1971) notes that "though this construction is avoided by most grammars, it is first recorded in the seventeenth century, in Racine's Bérénice:

"Bérénice, seigneur, ne vaut point tant d'alarmes
Ni que par votre amour l'univers malheureux...
Se voit en un moment enlever ses délices."

and it is now in common use, particularly but not exclusively in journalistic style." (Price 1971: 236-237).

The use of se voir in this sense has been generalized to such an extent that some linguists (Gaatone 1970: 22; Brieër-Van Akerlaken: 204) consider the verb to have acquired the status of an auxiliary, losing its normal full meaning (of seeing oneself, e.g. in a mirror) and keeping only a semantic specification which holds for a whole category. (cf. Guillaume's subductivité of avoir and être.)[15]

Its status appears to be parallel with that of être in

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[14] "Il paraît que maintenant le tour avec se voir est devenu un concurrent sérieux d'être comme auxiliaire du passif ...." (Brieër-Van Akerlaken 1967-69: 205).

[15] "...elle (la construction) permet de doter la langue d'un infinitif passif avec sujet de personne, pour les verbes transitifs se construisant avec un "objet secondaire" de chose." (Cocheyras 1968: 223).

representing passive notions. "Être permits a term which is not the 'logical' subject (i.e. the direct object) to function as grammatical subject, and links this grammatical subject to the past participle which has kept the semantic content of the verb but which has lost its other properties. Voir plays the same role with respect to the terms which are not 'logical' subjects as être does with respect to the direct object." (Gaatone 1970: 25 tr.). cf.:

(65) "Il était clerc, et peu après le couronnement, allait se voir octroyer l'évêché d'Ely" (Gaatone 1970: 23).

(66) "Ses complices se sont vu infliger les peines suivantes." (A 16).

(67) "...le premier ministre s'est vu demander s'il ne compatissait pas..." (Le Devoir: 15).

In all of the above sentences, the subjects are in a passive position; in the first two, the subjects are being given something, in the third, the subject is having questions and accusations aimed at him. It might well be asked then why a pronominal construction is used to express such obviously passive notions. The reason is that there is a nuance of activity implied in the process. The suggestion is that the subjets are witnesses to these events, and witnessing involves consciously directed awareness as well as retention of what has been perceived. It is perhaps the realization of this element of activity attaching to the primarily passive process of being asked, given to, suggested to, etc., on the part of speakers of French, which is reflected in the use of a pronominal construction to promote an indirect object to subject.

Other passive pronominals too are open to an interpretation which allows for a small proportion of activity to be perceived in a process which is principally passive. In the following sentence:

(68) "Pendant longtemps il a fallu cultiver les virus sur les animaux, puis un moyen plus économique s'est offert, la culture sur des oeufs en cours d'incubation." (A 14/2).

it is quite clear that the verb has a passive sense. But the pronominal form also permits the interpretation that the new method was perhaps so obvious that it seemed to stand out suddenly (and actively) from an obscure background, and, in effect, to present itself to researchers, as if endowed with active qualities.[16] And Stéfanini offers this 'active' interpretation of s'appeler: "The pronominal form permits us to indicate the infinitesimal 'parcel' of activity remaining in the process: one's name is received by heredity or baptism, but one bears one's name, one says it, one teaches it to others....With s'appeler, one can evoke more easily the very act of giving a name, the invention or creation of that name." (Stéfanini 1962: 633 tr.).

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[16] Damourette and Pichon too see that inanimate subjects of pronominals can receive a personified interpretation. In commenting on the following sentence, spoken by a Mme Hamelin: "Ces robes, difficiles à bien faire, ne s'exécutent que par Mlle. Palmire...", they say: "Dans la phrase de Mme Hamelin, on voit que c'est les robes qui sont presentées comme allant, par leur nature de robes, vers leur propre exécution. Mlle Palmire est en quelque sorte le moyen technique par lequel cette exécution s'accomplit." (Damourette and Pichon 1911-36: 736).

The passive value of the pronominal is thus never totally passive. In many cases the amount of activity may be imperceptible, but its presence is constant, and in many uses of the pronominal verb, it can be perceived as a small but important part of the combination of agent and patient within the subject.[17]

Frequency of Passive Pronominals. It has been estimated (Wandruszka) that sentences with a patient subject form about 10% of all sentences in French. One might then ask what proportion of this percentage is expressed by pronominal verbs with a passive sense.

In the one hundred pages of literary text by Mauriac, no more than four verbs out of 248 were found to express an apparently totally bound patient as subject. e.g.:

(69) "Ainsi s'interprétait la claustration..."

A close examination of other sorts of texts, however, reveals that the role played by pronominals in conveying passive notions is much more important. The texts are from scientific and technical publications, and the table shows that approximately 25% of the passive processes are expressed pronominally. Stéfanini believes that this is accounted for by the fact that "the pronominal provides the only means of placing the 'logical object' in subject position while at the

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[17] Anna Granville Hatcher makes a similar observation in her own terms: "And, wherever the Reflexive is found, it may be said that the subject is always allowed at least a minimal freedom to modify, to temper its own reaction; the reflexive will always offer this contrast to the passive construction of the same verb." (Hatcher 1942: 181).

same time presenting the process as imperfective, as if it were on-going." (Stéfanini 1962: 643 tr.). This imperfective value, as has already been seen, results from the presentation of the verbal process in the present tense, which combines both incident and decadent time. Most of the pronominal passives of this corpus were present tense, and were thus suitable for denoting industrial, chemical, medical, etc. processes, properties of matter, universal laws, etc.

The Expression of Passive Notions in Scientific & Technical Texts. (from AGER 1970, texts 46-60).

Theme of Text	Pronominal Verbs	Passive Periphrastic Verbs	
Heavy Ion Accelerator	2	4	
Einstein's Theory of Gravity	4	4	
Medical Experiments	3	17	
Speculations on Spontaneous Life	12	6	
Bodily Defences against Infection	2	5	
Cathode Ray Tubes	3	7	
Regulation of Glucose	2	6	
Properties of Acetic Acid	2	8	
Geophysics	1	7	
Acoustics	1	1	
Tool and Dye Making	0	1	
Construction of the Métro	0	7	
Textile Process	1	18	
Satellite Instruments	1	11	
Specifications of Vacuum Cleaners	1	9	
	35	111	146
	(24 %)	(76 %)	(100%)

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