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# On the Latin Aspectual System: A Case Study of the Verb *Amāre*

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## Abstract

This article falls within the field of studies of the aspect-tense system of Latin. It is a case study that deals specifically with the use and meanings of the pf. act. indicative and the impf. act. indicative of the verb *amāre* 'to love', which is seen as the prototypical verb for the category of stative (or non-dynamic) verbs. Using this verb as an example, this paper attempts to show that the lexical-semantic classification of verbs proposed by Vendler (1957) and still widely used today – albeit after various modifications – is not entirely suitable for Latin. The aim of this paper is thus not to *report* on how one particular verb (*amāre*) behaves, but rather to point out the methodological problems in the existing account of Latin aspect, which not only needs to be much more rigorously based on the description of the interrelations between grammatical devices and the lexical semantics of verbs, but also must work with a much more refined classification than that at the level of +/- dynamicity, +/- telicity, etc.

## Keywords

Latin tenses; Latin aspect; lexical classes; states; boundedness

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# 1 Preliminaries

## 1.1 General context

Any article that touches on the category of aspect in Latin must necessarily begin by affirming that it is a very problematic category, and although much has been written on the subject, there is still no universally accepted account of the Latin aspect-tense system.

Generally speaking, aspectual studies moved forward dramatically with Vendler's (1957) study, in which he divided verbs into four classes (states – activities – accomplishments – achievements)<sup>1</sup> according to their different relation to time, i.e. at what intervals the event described by them takes place, whether it has a predetermined end, etc. This study by Vendler set in motion a debate that has continued to this day, and which has produced various modifications of Vendler's original system, notably the addition of a fifth class of semelfactives (Comrie 1976: p. 42), a change of focus from verbs as such to predicates, and many other refinements of the characteristics of the classes, the tests on the basis of which they can be determined (i.e. the implications that this classification has), etc. All this has been described several times, very concisely and clearly e.g. in Rothstein (2016).

However, in this long-running debate, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the “states” class. Vendler himself, who quite admittedly bases his analysis on English verbs (p. 144), defines this class simply by the impossibility of forming continuous forms and by the association with a certain kind of temporal determination (p. 148): “As to states, the lack of continuous tenses (e.g., ‘I am knowing, loving, and so forth’) is enough to distinguish them from activities and accomplishments, and the form of time determination (‘How long...?’ ‘For such-and-such a period’) should be sufficient to keep them from being confused with achievements.” However, no one who primarily works with a language other than English (or with a language that does not have continuous forms like English) can be satisfied with this definition; moreover, the criterion of temporal determination “for...” is also problematic, as will be shown later. Vendler's more general and theoretical definition is that states, unlike all other classes, do not consist of phases succeeding one another in time (p. 144). This is how states differ from activities: for example, running consists of single regularly repeated steps. However, this definition cannot cope with events like *to sit*, which also do not have phases but can use *-ing* forms. Therefore, Vendler establishes – a bit vaguely – two other characteristics to distinguish activities from states: “shorter duration” (which is also problematic: soup can *be warm* only for a while) and “intentionality”.

In the following years, other perspectives were applied by other authors, and the following characteristics were gradually attributed to “states” (all of which are clearly spelled out in Rothstein 2016): first of all, they are “non-dynamic”,<sup>2</sup> which distinguishes

1 E.g. *to love* (states) – *to run* (activity) – *to draw a circle* (accomplishment) – *to win the race* (achievement).

2 Everyone intuitively understands what is meant by (non-)dynamicity, but in reality it is not quite so easy to define. Rothstein (2016: p. 346): “The non-dynamic property means that if a state holds, this situation will continue unchanged until it is terminated by an external event.”

them from all other verb classes; then, together with activities, as opposed to the other two verb classes, they are “atelic” (= not directed towards a specific end), “homogenous” (= they have no internal structure) and “cumulative” (= “cumulative” is a predicate that denotes a situation of which any part can be called by this predicate). Rothstein (2016: p. 352) summarizes all of these characteristics in the following definition: “States are predicates with no internal structure and are thus non-dynamic since they do not involve change. They do not decompose,<sup>3</sup> and they hold at intervals, but because they have no internal structure, they hold homogeneously down to the most minimal of intervals, namely instants.”

It is not the purpose of this study to find, on the basis of exclusively Latin material, a new definition of the verb class of “states”. In fact, when working with a language with a closed corpus, the procedure is quite different from that used with living languages and demonstrated by Vendler in his pioneering article. It is not possible to simply state that some sentences are incorrect (as Vendler might say of the sentence *\*John is loving Mary* or *\*John loves Mary in ten years*). It takes a native speaker or a sufficiently large corpus to make such statements, which Latin in any case does not have. However, what is possible when working with a language with a closed corpus is to test the functionality of classifications made when working with modern languages.

For Latin linguists, what matters is what the implications of such a classification are. In this particular case we ask whether this classification sheds light on the aspectual system of Latin, or quite simply, whether it provides any explanation for the use of Latin verb tenses.<sup>4</sup> What I wish to demonstrate in this paper is that the current definition of the class of “states” does not make a significant contribution to the understanding of the Latin aspect-temporal system, and that, at least for Latin, a different perspective must be introduced.

Before proceeding to work with the Latin material, let us summarize in the very briefest terms what the Latin grammars say regarding the use of the perfect and imperfect indicative.

## 1.2 Latin perfect and imperfect

First, it should be said that all the scholarly grammars I am aware of just enumerate the various meanings and functions that imperfect or perfect indicative forms can have in Latin, without addressing the *conditions* under which they have these meanings (by

3 Dowty (1979: p. 37ff.) classifies predicates on the basis of whether their meaning can be decomposed into the lexical semantic primitives “do”, “cause” and “result”.

4 In contrast to English, on which Vendler’s classification and its further modifications were based, which has a triad of past simple – past continuous – present perfect, Latin has only two “tenses” with corresponding functions: imperfect and perfect. The imperfect incorporates the functions of the English past simple and past continuous, while the perfect incorporates the functions of the past simple and present perfect. This alone makes it clear that different issues need to be addressed when working with Latin rather than English.

which I primarily mean the combination of a given “tense suffix” with the specific lexical meaning of the verb). Even Pinkster, who has a chapter devoted to the basic semantic types of verbs at the beginning of the first volume of his *Oxford Latin Syntax* (Pinkster 2015: pp. 22–24, ch. 2.9 “States of affairs”),<sup>5</sup> does not really work with this concept in his subsequent explanations. It can be seen, for example, on pp. 382–383, where he reports that for Varro it is the forms *amō – amābō – amābam* (i.e. *imperfectum*) that represent the categories *praesens – futurum – praeteritum*, whereas for Charisius it is *amō – amābō – amāvī* (i.e. *perfectum*). Then, in note 10, he rightly mentions that Charisius is in fact working with the verb *legere*, i.e. *legō – legam – legī*. This, however, is a crucial difference. For the verb *legere*, as a representative of dynamic and telic verbs, it is certainly true that *perfectum* is the unmarked past tense; but as we will see, for stative verbs (of which *amāre* is a representative) this may not be the case.<sup>6</sup>

As far as the imperfect is concerned, the basic definition given in Kühner and Stegmann (1912; hereafter referred to as *KS*) is that it denotes “Handlung in ihrem Verlaufe, ihrer Entwicklung, in der Vergangenheit” (p. 122). This is obviously a formulation that does not take much account of stative, i.e. non-dynamic verbs. Pinkster (2015: p. 410) overcomes this inadequacy and gives a more general account: “The imperfect indicative tense is used to assert that a state of affairs was taking place at some moment in the past and had not yet finished or come to an end.” Pinkster takes the general position that it is the idea of relative tense, not perfective and imperfective aspect, that is fundamental in the classical Latin verb system.<sup>7</sup> The imperfect therefore denotes the past on the absolute time axis and simultaneity on the relative time axis.

On the use of the Latin imperfect, Pinkster (2015: p. 416) summarizes: “Given its semantic value, the imperfect indicative is appropriate to texts or passages describing (i) habits and customs by individuals and groups, (ii) features and characteristics of persons, regions, buildings, etc., (iii) events occurring more than once or parallel events concerning one or more persons.” Thus, in (i), Pinkster describes what tends to be explicitly referred to in other texts as the “habitual imperfect”, and in (iii) as the “iterative imperfect”. In addition to this, the so-called “epistolary imperfect” is also commonly mentioned, as well as imperfects with conative and ingressive meanings. Hoffmann and Szantyr (1965: p. 316) consider these specific meanings to be secondary, but equally understand the meaning of simultaneity as secondary, which for Pinkster is an essential characteristic.<sup>8</sup>

5 As he himself writes in note 12, he draws on his conception in Pinkster (1990), with adaptations from Haverling (2000: pp. 22–31).

6 It must be added, however, that even Varro himself in the passage quoted (*ling.* 8,20) does not deal with the verb *amāre*, but *salūtāre*. Varro uses the verb *amāre* only in his explanation of the meaning of passive forms (*ling.* 10,48).

7 See, e.g., Pinkster (2015: p. 383), but he had already defined it extensively in his previous works, in particular Pinkster (1983).

8 Note that Vaníková (2019) identified the iterative and conative meaning of the imperfect in the type of verbs she analysed (i.e., telic verbs with a telicising prefix) as absolutely predominant.

The meaning of the Latin *perfectum* has been the subject of much deeper controversy in Latin linguistics, which is briefly summarized by Haverling (2000: pp. 11–13). It was raised by Meillet's (1897) description of the pf. ind. as the form expressing “action achevée au moment présent (completed action in the present)”. The other pole in the controversy is represented by Serbat (1976, 1977), who argues that the Latin perfect is almost always used as a past tense, and that the cases where it has the “present perfect” meaning are rare and are residuals of an earlier state. *KS* and other major grammars reflect that the classical Latin perfect indicative was formed by the fusion of the original *perfectum* and the aorist, and that from a functional point of view it preserves the features of both components, i.e., it can be used in two ways, as summarised clearly by e.g. Haverling (2010: p. 343): “When the Latin perfect is used as a perfect, it indicates ‘current relevance’ – that is an action which has been performed in the past is still relevant in the present moment. In such cases, it may be found with temporal adverbials locating the situation in the present; it then corresponds to the Greek perfect (ἀφίγμαι) and the English past tense *I have come*. But when it is used as a general past tense, the Latin perfect may occur with temporal adverbials locating event in a moment before ‘reference time’: it then corresponds to the Greek aorist (ἀφικόμην) and the English past tense *I came*.” These two functions are usually called *perfectum praesens* and *perfectum historicum* in Latin grammars.

*KS*' description of *perfectum praesens* does not, again, take much account of verbs that are non-dynamic and atelic in nature, since its basic definition is that it denotes “die in der Gegenwart des Redenden vollendete Handlung” (p. 124). However, a few lines later the following is added: “Da die Römer bei dem Gebrauche des perfectum praesens weniger den eigentlichen Akt der Vollendung als das aus der Vollendung für die Gegenwart hervorgehende Ergebnis ins Auge faßten, so bezeichnet es zweitens einen durch die Vollendung der Tätigkeitsäußerung eingetretenen Zustand.”

The *perfectum historicum* is described simply as an event that took place in the past, with no importance of whether it is described as developing or terminated in the past. In *KS*' survey, the historical perfect thus has a functional overlap with the imperfect (see e.g. “Anm. 1” on p. 128 regarding the use of pf. to refer to accompanying circumstances). Although *KS* do not comment in this way, it can be said that such an overlap is entirely appropriate and expected, because for at least some types of Latin verbs it holds that in the *perfectum–imperfectum* opposition, the imperfect is the marked and the perfect is the unmarked member (which means that the perfect can be used for meanings that we normally understand as belonging to the imperfect: depicting ongoing events, accompanying circumstances, etc.).

Pinkster, again, tries to be as general as possible and arrives at the following definition, which includes both the meaning of the historical perfect and that of the *perfectum praesens*; for the latter, however, he emphasizes the past event, not the present state that results from it (2015: p. 442): “When using the perfect indicative tense, the speaker asserts that an event has taken place before the moment he is uttering the assertion.” Thus, symmetrically to the definition of imperfect, perfect for Pinkster denotes anteriority to a present reference point (while imperfect denotes simultaneity to a past reference

point).<sup>9</sup> Pinkster further (p. 446) states that “with terminative states of affairs the perfect may be interpreted as describing a resulting state”. The verbs denoting the non-dynamic states of affairs (that is, stative verbs) are explicitly mentioned twice in the explanation of the meaning of the perfect. On p. 446 Pinkster states that especially with this type of verb the so-called “negative” use of perfect appears, such as *Habitat? Habitavit*. (“... an event may be presented as anterior to the time of speaking in such a way that the two points of time are contrasted. Thus, the event is interpreted as ‘no longer being the case now’.”).<sup>10</sup> On p. 448 Pinkster mentions that “some scholars assume” that the perfect of stative verbs may also have ingressive meaning, but he himself is not convinced by this interpretation.

As indicated at the end of the previous section, my long-term goal (together with M. Vaníková) is to modify the existing classification of predicates so that it has some real implications for describing the Latin aspect-tense system. This paper is merely one of the many partial contributions to addressing this question – a small piece of the mosaic. It builds in a sense on the work of Vaníková (2019; 2024; forthc.), who worked out the meanings of imperfective forms (in contrast to perfective forms) in verbs that are telic and whose telicity is brought into the meaning of the verb by a prefix: she shows that the imperfective forms of these verbs have very specific meanings. However, the same results do not hold for predicates in which telicity is caused not by the prefix but, for example, by a combination with a certain type of constituent. Thus, it suggests that for a systematic description of the Latin aspect-tense system, a classification at the level of +/-telicity, +/-dynamicity etc., is not sufficient.

This paper is the same in approach, but it will work on the opposite side of the system: it wishes to deal with stative (i.e. non-dynamic) verbs and check their combinability with tense suffixes. Unlike Vaníková, who took the approach of examining all verbs with the prefix *ex-* within a rather large corpus of texts of archaic and classical Latin authors, we must use a different approach: stative verbs are not formally marked in Latin from a synchronic point of view and the criteria that have otherwise been commonly used since Vendler to determine that a verb is stative are inapplicable to Latin, as noted above. Thus, in order to avoid, in this brief study, uncertainty about whether or not a particular verb is indeed stative (i.e., non-dynamic), we have chosen the approach of analysing only one verb that is considered prototypical in this category: “to love”, specifically in two authors with large and register-diverse corpora of texts, Plautus and Cicero.

9 A major shortcoming of these definitions, however, is that the point of reference in the case of the imperfect is (explicitly or implicitly) in the text, whereas in the case of the perfect it is the moment of utterance. And as Pinkster himself states elsewhere (1983: p. 276, paraphrasing Bull 1960): “a tense which marks an event as simultaneous with respect to some orientation moment in the past is logically equivalent to a tense which marks an event as anterior with respect to the moment of speaking. In both cases the event is ‘past’”. Thus, definitions constructed in this way do not effectively set the imperfect and the perfect in opposition.

10 This meaning does not appear at all in the linguistic material we work with in this article in the Section 2.

## 2 Latin *amāre*

### 2.1 Theoretical considerations

“To love” serves as an example of a stative verb in most texts dealing with lexical verb classes. Usually, the stereotypical sentence *John loves Mary* or *John loved Mary* is used, together (if necessary) with a temporal determination of the type either *when he was young* or *for ten years*. The problem arises, however, when we replace *Mary* with some more abstract object of love: *John loved his homeland for ten years* or *John loved justice for ten years* sounds bizarre. This means that the second test proposed by Vendler for identifying stative verbs (in addition to the inability to form continuous forms) does not work very smoothly either. And it is not just the difference between a concrete and an abstract object of love: *John loved his son for ten years* is a similarly unlikely statement. Thus, although states have *no internal structure* (cf. the definition by Rothstein cited in 1.1), they may differ in terms of their *implicit (un)boundedness*, which can have major implications in Latin.

By *implicit (un)boundedness* I mean, in simple terms, the probability of the duration of the given state in the real world. *Amāre patriam*, ‘to love one’s homeland’, is typically a state that has no beginning and no end as such; the beginning and the end can only be given by the beginning/end of the existence of the experiencer or of the theme of the state. Therefore, this state can be labelled as implicitly unbounded. *Amāre mulierem*, ‘to love a woman’, is bounded in the real world at least at the beginning (one must first “fall in love”); and, I dare say, even its end is implicitly expected. This also means that this type of “state of love” can occur repeatedly on the timeline of the real life of one experiencer, which, on the contrary, is not possible with the type of love that has no beginning or end. On the other hand, the type of “love without boundaries” can exist in any number of coexisting states (*John loves his country, justice, truth and fairness.*).

Yet another type of boundedness can be identified for another prototypical state, “to know”. We can call it *partially bounded* or, more specifically, *lower bounded*: “knowing” is necessarily bounded from below (one must first “get to know” something), but typically it is not bounded from above (knowledge proceeds without an implicit end). This makes the state of “knowing” similar to that of *amāre patriam* in that individual “knowings” cannot be chained, but conversely, one experiencer can know infinitely many things at the same time. In contrast, for example, “to sit” (which, in my view, *is* a stative verb from the point of view of the basic theoretical definition of this type of event,<sup>11</sup> and indeed from the point of view of its word-formation) is bounded, like *amāre mulierem*; where it differs is in the feature of intentionality mentioned by Vendler, and also in its typically shorter duration in the real world. I will comment on the difference between these types of states elsewhere; in this article I wish to only explicitly deal with the difference between *unbounded* and *bounded states*, using the example of the verb *amāre*.<sup>12</sup>

11 This is a quite common opinion, expressed already by Dowty (1979); cf. Rothmayr (2009: p. 4).

12 Rothmayr’s (2009) monograph on stative verbs lists the verb “to love” among “subject-experiencer verbs” in the chapter “Non-ambiguous statives”. Rothmayr’s approach is syntactic; she regards the verb “to love” as homogeneous because it always has two arguments, the subject being the experiencer. Thus, for our



## 2.2 Analysis of the language material

### 2.2.1 Total counts

The following table shows the number of occurrences of this verb in both authors (Plautus and Cicero) according to each form (we do not deal with the categories of person and number):<sup>13</sup>

		Plautus		Cicero	
		active	passive	active	passive
praesens	indicativus	135	2	125	6
	coniunctivus	88	2	35	5
imperfectum	indicativus	10	0	12	0
	coniunctivus	9	0	17	1
futurum I		20	0	7	0
infinitivus		60	7	25	40
<i>amāns, amant*</i> (= PPA)		86		27	
<i>amātūr*</i> (= PFA + inf. fut.)		0		1	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>419</b>		<b>301</b>	
perfectum	indicativus	6	1	26	0
	coniunctivus	0	0	0	0
plusquamperfectum	indicativus	1	0	0	0
	coniunctivus	0	0	1	0
futurum II		0	0	0	0
infinitivus		0	0	0	0
<i>amāt*</i> (PPP)			0		0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>28</b>	

As can be seen from the table, the difference in the total number of preserved forms in the *imperfectum* and *perfectum* systems is extreme for both authors. In the perfect system, there are even zero occurrences in most cells of the table for both authors (which is almost bizarre, given that the verb *amāre* is used as an inflectional paradigm in some textbooks). But if we contrast only the imperfect active indicative and the perfect active indicative, which are the forms that need to be considered first in studies of the Latin aspectual system, the picture is different (Plautus: 10 impf. x 6 pf.; Cicero: 12 impf. x 26

paper, this otherwise excellent monograph does not bring forth much relevance, since the point of our reasoning lies in the various semantics of the object.

13 Not listed in the table are those forms that belong to the *imperfectum* system but cannot be put in opposition to some form of the *perfectum* system, i.e. imperatives, gerund and gerundive, and adverb *amanter*; further, I do not list here the relic *s*-forms (*amāss\**). The lexicalized *amābō* ('please') is not counted among the forms of future I in the table; there are 98 instances in Plautus, 20 in Cicero.

pf.).<sup>14</sup> In other words, those forms that unambiguously carry the meaning of perfectivity or anteriority (coni. pf.; plsqpf.; fut. II) are almost entirely absent. For the ind. pf. act., however, this meaning is not so unambiguous.

Of the 54 cases of the pf. and impf. ind., 28 belong semantically to the group “love without end or beginning” and 25 to the group “love with an expectedly limited duration”. One example is completely different and will therefore be excluded from the following analysis. In the passage Cic. *Catil.* 2,8, the verb *amāre* is used as a euphemism for the sexual act: *qui alios ipse amabat turpissime, aliorum amori flagitiosissime serviebat* (“he himself loved some very impudently, shamefully served the passion of others”). Here the verb *amāre* cannot be described as static (non-dynamic) but is a denotation of a dynamic event. The imperfect form here has an iterative meaning.

Let us look at the individual cases in more detail.

### 2.2.2 *Amāre* as an everlasting emotion

As mentioned above, there are 28 instances of pf. and impf. ind. in this meaning in our corpus. Their distribution is 22 perfects versus 6 imperfects.

#### 2.2.2.1 Perfect

##### a) *Amāv*\* (+ object) with the meaning “I have (always) loved/ admired/ worshipped (someone/ something) and still love/ admire/ worship”

This meaning is found in 11 out of 22 cases. The object of love (= a theme) is a good friend or his great character qualities, or (in example (5)) a noble activity. In all cases the verb is in the 1st or 2nd person singular, so it is clear that the experiencer of the emotion is alive. The perfect *amāv-* has a meaning of the *perfectum praesens* (see above) – it is a designation of a state that exists continuously in the past and in the present. In the first seven examples this is supported by the explicit adverb *semper*,<sup>15</sup> and in example (8) by *antehac* with a similar meaning.

- (1) *amo autem et semper amavi ingenium studia mores tuos* (Cic. *orat.* 33)  
“I love and have always loved your talents, education and manners”<sup>16</sup>

14 The total number of impf. act. ind. for authors up to ca. 200 A.D. (= *Antiquitas* section of the *Library of Latin texts* database, Brepols) is 73, the total number of pf. act. ind. is 128. Therefore, we are working with 30% and 25% of the records from a given period, respectively.

15 The combination of *semper* with *amāre* in the imperfect is not preserved, not only in the two authors under consideration, but, it may be said, in natural Latin in general: the first evidence of such a combination is found only in *Beda Venerabilis*.

16 All translations of Plautus’ texts into English in this article are the work of Wolfgang de Melo; the translations of Cicero are my own.

- (2) *tantum te oro ut, quoniam me ipsum **semper amasti**, ut eodem amore sis* (Cic. Att. 3,5)  
“all I ask is that you keep the same love for me, because you’ve always loved me”
- (3) *cum te **semper amavi** ..., tum his temporibus res publica te mihi ita commendavit, ut caritorem habeam neminem* (Cic. Att. 14,13b,1)  
“I have always loved you ..., but especially at this time the interests of the State have so commended you to me that I hold no one dearer”
- (4) *te vero emoneo ..., ut .... magnitudinem(que) animi tui, quam ego semper sum admiratus **semperque amavi**, ne umquam inflectas cuiusquam iniuria* (Cic. fam. 1,7,9)  
“I urge you to never, under the influence of anyone’s injustice, distort your noble spirit, which I have always admired and loved”
- (5) *quantum litteris, quantum studiis ... consequi poterimus, id omne ad arbitrium tuum, qui haec **semper amasti**, libentissime conferemus* (Cic. fam. 1,9,23)  
“whatever I achieve in literature or in learning ... I shall be most happy to submit to your judgment, for you have always loved such things”
- (6) ***semper amavi**, ut scis, M. Brutum propter eius summum ingenium, suavissimos mores, singularem probitatem atque constantiam* (Cic. fam. 9,14,5)  
“as you know, I have always loved Marcus Brutus for his excellent skills, very pleasant demeanour, and extraordinary honesty and integrity”
- (7) *cum te **semper amavi** dilexique, tum mei amantissimum cognovi in omni varietate rerum mearum* (Cic. fam. 15,7,1)  
“I have always loved and respected you, but I have come to understand that you also have a special affection for me, throughout all my turbulent destiny”
- (8) *quom ego **antehac te amavi** et mi amicam esse crevi* (Plaut. Cist. 1)  
“I’ve always loved you and decided that you were my friend”
- (9) *nimis inquam in isto Brutum **amasti**, dulcissime Attice, nos vereor ne parum* (Cic. Att. 6,2,9)  
“in this, my dearest Atticus, you have loved Brutus too much, and I fear I have not enough”
- (10) *si quantum me amas et **amasti** tantum amare deberes ac debuisses, numquam esses passus me ... egere consilio* (Cic. Att. 3,15,4)  
“if it were your duty to love me as you love me and have loved me, you would never allow me to lack judgment”<sup>17</sup>

17 In the phrase *amās et amāstī*, *amāstī* could perhaps be seen as denoting the state only in the past, i.e. so that the meaning of the permanent state is the sum of the meanings of both forms (schematically: *amās* now + *amāstī* in the past = ‘you have always loved’). In my view, however, it is more correct to see a gradation

- (11) *virtutem enim amavi illius viri, quae exstincta non est* (Cic. *Lael.* 102)  
 “because I loved that man’s virtue, and that is not dead”<sup>18</sup>

### b) *Amāv\** (+ object) in association with deceased persons

This meaning is found in 9 out of 22 cases. The emotion expressed by the verb *amāre* is similar to that in the examples mentioned under a): it is a noble and enduring love, which did not end for internal reasons (if it can be said to have ended at all) but continued throughout the whole period of the co-existence of the experiencer and the theme (= the object of love). At the time which is the point of reference, the experiencer of love or its theme are already dead.

In the first three examples of this type ((12)–(14)), the state of enduring love for the dead person is cited as the justification for grief in the present. Thus, the past is not accentuated; the speaker is sad in the present because the feeling for the person who has died is still ongoing:

- (12) *de hereditate Preciana – quae quidem mihi magno dolori est; valde enim illum amavi –, sed hoc velim cures: ...* (Cic. *fam.* 14,5,2)

“As for Precius’ inheritance – I am deeply saddened by it, because I loved the man very much – I wish for you to look after it: ...”

- (13) *qui me valde movet, vel quod amavi hominem sicut ille me, vel...* (Cic. *ac.* 1 113)

“who affects me deeply, whether it is because I loved that man as much as he loved me, or...”

- (14) *quare, si tibi unum hoc detrahi potest, ne quid iis, quos amasti, mali putes contigisse, permultum erit ex maerore tuo deminutum* (Cic. *fam.* 5,16,5)

“therefore, if you can remove this one thought from your mind, lest you think that any harm has befallen those you loved, your sorrow will have been very much relieved”

In the following three examples ((15)–(17)), the past is more accentuated, because the feeling for a dead person is compared with the feeling for another person who is alive. However, the two feelings are not mutually exclusive; nowhere is it said that the previous feeling has ended, and certainly not that it has been *completed before* the beginning of the other feeling. The perfect *amāv\** thus has the meaning of past here, but certainly not of anteriority:

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between the two forms: you love now, and indeed you have always loved, i.e. *amasti* includes *amās* (schematically: *amās* now + \*\*\* in the past = *amasti* ‘you have always loved’). The same phrase (*amō et amāvī*) appears also with the explicit adverb *semper* – see example (1).

18 This sentence refers to a deceased person, so this example could be moved under b). However, the author explicitly treats the object of love (*virtus*) as if it had not died.

- (15) *alterum vivum amavi, alterum non odi mortuum* (Cic. *off.* 3,18,73)  
 “I had loved the one while he was alive, and I have no hatred for the other now that he is dead”
- (16) *nam et quanti patrem feci, totum in hunc ipsum per se aequae amo atque illum amavi* (Cic. *Att.* 13,1,3)  
 “as much as I valued his father, I’ve transferred all that to him, but also for his own sake I love him as much as I loved his father”
- (17) *valde diligit Patronem, valde Phaedrum amavit* (Cic. *fam.* 13,1,5)  
 “he is very fond of Patronus and loved Phaedrus very much”

In the last three examples ((18)–(20)), the dead person is the one who was the experiencer of the state; here, therefore, it is undoubtedly a denotation of a past state:

- (18) *patrem tuum plurimi feci meque ille mirifice et coluit et amavit* (Cic. *Att.* 16,16d)  
 “I greatly valued your father, and he also admirably respected and loved me”
- (19) *imago avi tui, clarissimi viri, qui amavit unice patriam et cives suos, quae quidem te a tanto scelere etiam muta revocare debuit* (Cic. *Catil.* 3,10)  
 “the image of your grandfather, a glorious man who had uniquely loved his country and his fellow citizens, which, though mute, should have dissuaded you from such a crime”
- (20) *Eurydica prognata, pater quam noster amavit, vires vitaeque corpus meum nunc deserit omne* (Cic. *div.* 1,40)<sup>19</sup>  
 “O daughter of Eurydice, you whom our father had loved, the life force is now leaving my whole body”

c) ***Amāv\** (+ object) with an explicit or implicit negation in the sense of “have never (yet) loved (someone or something)”**

Here the situation is different: the predicate is negated by the adverbial *numquam/nihil umquam* and thus denotes not just the non-existence of a state, but zero experience of such a state. It is clearly, again, the designation of a continuous state in the past and in the present.<sup>20</sup>

19 This is not actually Cicero, but a fragment from Ennius; the form *amāvit* here could theoretically be the past tense of the inchoative *amāscō* ‘to fall in love’, which, as Diomedes (*gramm.* I 343,11) notes, the ancient authors used. However, apart from secondary reports by grammarians, this verb is not attested in any texts, and classical authors use the prefixed *adamāvī* in the sense of “fell in love”.

20 Cf. also example (47) below. The combination (*n*)*umquam* + *amābā\** not only does not occur in Plautus

- (21) *quae qui non vident, nihil umquam magnum ac cognitione dignum amaverunt* (Cic. *fn.* 5,19,50)  
 “those who do not see this have never loved anything noble and worth knowing”
- (22) *cui nisi invidisset is, quem tu numquam amasti – me enim amabas*<sup>21</sup> –, *et ipse beatus esset et omnes boni* (Cic. *fam.* 5,21,2)  
 If he whom you never loved – for you have loved me – had not been jealous of him, he too would now be prosperous, and all good men too.”

### 2.2.2.2 Imperfect

The verb *amāre* in the sense of an everlasting emotion is represented in the imperfect only six times in our corpus (compared to 22 instances of the perfect). The distinctive feature of the examples given at this point, compared with those in 2.2.2.1, is that they are not merely a statement of a state (which actually serves as a characterization of its experiencer or theme), but that the fact of the existence of enduring love is set in *conflict* with some other ongoing state of affairs.

The first example (23) expresses the contradiction between the state of love (and, implicitly, the behaviour that is expected to follow from this state) and the actual behaviour (“he loved her, but...”):

- (23) *hanc vir amabat, verum tamen huius (sc. Verris) libidini adversari nec poterat nec audebat* (Cic. *Verr.*, *actio secunda*, 5,82)  
 “her husband loved her, yet he had neither the strength nor the courage to resist Verres’ lust”

The second example (24) is similar, although the contradiction is formulated in a much more sophisticated way:

- (24) *virum bonum et magnum hominem ... perdidimus nosque malo solacio sed non nullo tamen consolamur ... quia sic amabat patriam ut mihi aliquo deorum beneficio videatur ex eius incendio esse ereptus* (Cic. *Att.* 4,6,1)  
 “we have lost a good citizen and a great man; my consolation is poor, but there is one... for he loved his country so much that it seems to have been some favour of the gods that plucked him from its fire”

Whichever way the sentence is syntactically constructed, its meaning is: “although he loved his country very much, it is actually a good thing that he was torn from it, because his country is now in a terrible state (and at least he does not have to look at it)”.

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and Cicero but is not attested even once in the entire corpus of texts included in the *Library of Latin texts* (Brepols).

21 See example (25) below.

The next two examples ((25) and (26)) also do not simply state that someone (dis)loves someone/ something, but this fact is a substantiation of another state of affairs which is negatively formulated – there is a contradiction between the two states of affairs: “you have loved me and therefore you never loved him (because the two cannot go together)”/ “I don’t love him and therefore I can’t praise him”. The imperfect here conveys relative time: although love or, conversely, dislike certainly persists in the author’s present, it is the simultaneity with the past action/state that is emphasized here:

(25) *cui nisi invidisset is, quem tu numquam amasti – me enim amabas –, et ipse beatus esset et omnes boni* (Cic. *fam.* 5,21,2)

“If he whom you never loved – for you have loved me – had not been jealous of him, he too would now be prosperous, and all good men too.”

(26) *quarum alteram non libebat mihi scribere +qui abscuram+, alteram, ne laudarem eum quem non amabam* (Cic. *Att.* 2,7,1)

“one of which I did not want to write because [...], the other because I did not want to praise a man I did not like”

In the following example (27), the verb *amāre* is in a relative clause that replaces a nominal expression: *quae amābās* = ‘my good (character) traits’. In the main clause, however, the author says that these ‘good traits’ have disappeared. He thus phrases it as if the state of “enduring love without end” had to end here, contrary to expectation, because its very object (= the traits that were supposed to be enduring) had disappeared:

(27) *non enim iam in me idem esse poteris; perierunt illa, quae amabas* (Cic. *Att.* 12,14,3)

“because now you won’t be able to feel for me the way you used to; everything you loved about me is gone”

The interpretation of the following example is more complicated:

(28) *Quid vero tuum filium, imaginem tuam, quem meus Cicero et amabat ut fratrem et iam ut maiorem fratrem verebatur?* (Cic. *ad Q. fr.* 1,3,3)

“So, too, your own son, your own image, whom my little Cicero loved as a brother, and was now beginning to respect as an elder brother!”<sup>22</sup>

Here the interpretation of the impf. *amābat* is not quite clear. Both cousins referred to here are alive and there is no reason to think that they would no longer like each other. Shuckburgh translates the phrase *iam verebatur* ingressively, i.e., “was (now) beginning to respect”. The situation is probably thus: the younger cousin had always loved the elder as a brother, and this relationship had recently begun to transform into a relationship of respect from the younger to the elder. Thus, *amābat* here expresses a kind of childlike

22 Transl. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh.

love, the higher level of which is a relationship of respect; the “love” here is thus actually a feeling that was not permanent, but in a different sense than the state of “being in love with someone” in 2.2.3: it has been transformed into an affection of an even higher quality.

### 2.2.3 *Amāre* as an emotion with an implicit beginning and end

In our corpus, there are 25 such instances where the verb *amāre* in the pf. or impf. ind. denotes either romantic affection or a passing liking or popularity. The ratio of imperfect to perfect forms here is different than in the case of *amāre* as an everlasting state: there are 10 instances of perfect and 15 instances of imperfect (in the case of everlasting love it was 22 : 6). Let us therefore begin with the imperfect, which is the majority form for this meaning.

#### 2.2.3.1 Imperfect

##### a) *Amābā\** meaning “was in love with a woman/ young man”

Six of the 15 cases simply report a romantic relationship; it is not “love” as a noble and lasting emotion as in 2.2.2 but rather “being in love with someone”. In four of the cases, the verb *amābā\** occurs in a relative clause identifying the person being referred to (= “the one with whom he was in love”):

(29) *per fallaciam / quam amabam abduxit ab lenone mulierem* (Plaut. *Asin.* 70–71)  
“by a trick abducted the woman I was in love with from a pimp”

(30) *ipse mandavit mihi ab lenone ut fidicina / quam amabat emeretur sibi* (Plaut. *Epid.* 47–48)  
“he certainly told me himself to buy him a lyre girl he was in love with from a pimp”

(31) *sublinit os illi lenae, matri mulieris quam erus meus amabat* (Plaut. *Mil.* 110–111)  
“he tricks that procuress, the mother of the girl my master was in love with”

(32) *adulescentulo, quem amabat, tradidisse gladium dicitur* (Cic. *Tusc.* 5,20,60)  
“he is said to have given the sword to the young man he was fond of”

In another case, the verb is in the main clause; it is part of the exposition:

(33) *is amabat meretricem +matre+ Athenis Atticis / et illa illum contra* (Plaut. *Mil.* 100–101)  
“he was madly in love with a prostitute in Attic Athens, and she in turn with him”



The last case is specific in that it is explicitly said that the love (or “being in love”) no longer lasts and the young man is currently in love with someone else:

- (34) *illam amabam olim: nunc iam alia cura impendit pectoris* (Plaut. *Epid.* 135)  
 “I used to love her long ago, but now another love overhangs my breast”

#### b) *Amābā*\* to indicate popularity

In three cases, the verb is in the 3rd person plural with an indefinite or very general experiencer; this construction expresses a (not necessarily quite permanent) characteristic of the theme (“was popular, liked”).

- (35) *nemo quisquam acceptior: / servi liberique amabant* (Plaut. *Pers.* 649)  
 “no one was more welcome; slaves and freeborn loved him alike”
- (36) *Iam id porro utrum libentes an inviti dabant? Libentes? Amabant credo Apronium!* (Cic. *Verr.*, *actio secunda*, 3,118)  
 “And further, did they give it voluntarily or involuntarily? Voluntarily? I suppose they liked Apronius very much!”<sup>23</sup>
- (37) *horum homines nomen, orationem, vultum, incessum amabant* (Cic. *Sest.* 105)  
 “men loved their names, their speech, their faces, their gait”<sup>24</sup>

#### c) *Amābā*\* denoting irreality

Four of the ten instances in Plautus are of a specific kind: the imperfect indicative appears here in a conditional clause in the *irrealis* sense, i.e. in the place where the subjunctive imperfect should appear according to the classical norm. In all instances the verb *amāre* is used intransitively.

- (38) *siquidem amabas proin...* (Plaut. *Cist.* 488, a broken verse)  
 “if you loved her, then...”
- (39) *nam si amabas iam oportebat nasum abreptum mordicus* (Plaut. *Men.* 194)  
 “if you loved him, you ought to have bitten off his nose by now”<sup>25</sup>

23 Or rather: “They must have really loved him a lot!” It is an ironic statement that is close to the sense of irreality appearing in the examples (38)–(41).

24 In examples (35) and (37), one could also consider distributive iterativity (that is, the iteration does not proceed in time, but the event is carried by multiple subjects, each separately).

25 The question is whether here and in the previous case de Melo’s translation is correct; perhaps it would be more appropriate to use the intransitive “if you were in love, ...”.

- (40) *si amabas, invenires mutuom* (Plaut. *Pseud.* 286)  
 “if you’d been in love, you should have got the money on loan“
- (41) *Si amabat, rogas quid faceret?* (Plaut. *Rud.* 379)  
 “You ask what he should have done, if he was in love?”

We will not interpret these cases in further detail because the question of the use of the indicative instead of the subjunctive in these cases, interesting as it is, is not the subject of this article.<sup>26</sup>

**d) *Amābā\** (+ object) meaning “I appreciated sth.; I was pleased with sth.”**

- (42) *Alexidis manum amabam quod tam prope accedebat ad similitudinem tuae, litteras non amabam quod indicabant te non valere* (Cic. *Att.* 7,2,3)  
 “I was pleased with Alexis’s handwriting, because it is almost a perfect copy of yours, but the fact that he wrote the letter did not please me, because it indicated that you were not well.”

The verb *amāre* meaning “to appreciate” is attested four times in our corpus with the perfect *amāv\** (see below examples (48)–(51)). A characteristic feature of this example (42) is that here – similarly as in the examples (23)–(26) – the first *amābam* is not a simple statement of fact (“it pleased me”), but indicates that something that contradicts it will follow.

### 2.2.3.2 Perfect

**a) *Amāv\** without an explicit object in the sense of “(he/she) experienced love (> knows what love is)”**

The verb in this meaning is intransitive. In examples (43) and (44) the verb denotes a state in the present that results from (at least one) experience of “falling/ being in love” (no matter how long it lasted). The present state of “having experience with love” is irreversible and cannot come to an end as long as its experiencer exists. Examples (45) and (46) provide information that such a situation occurred sometime in the past.

26 Vendler (1957: p. 148) mentions “by way of digression, a surprising feature about states”, namely that in the case of states (and not of predicates of other classes), the conditionals “could” are interchangeable with “would” and “be able to love” actually means the same as “love”. This is indeed a different situation from the one we encounter here, but it suggests that states may have a specific relation to expressing modality.

- (43) *si amavit umquam ... / ... clementi animo ignoscet* (Plaut. *Mil.* 209–210)  
“if he’s ever been in love ... he’ll benevolently forgive me”
- (44) *nam nisi qui ipse amavit, aegre amantis ingenium inspicit* (Plaut. *Mil.* 639)  
“unless someone’s been in love himself he hardly understands a lover’s mind”
- (45) *amavi equidem hercle ego olim in adolescentia: / verum ad hoc exemplum numquam, ut nunc insanio* (Plaut. *Merc.* 264–265)  
“I was indeed in love long ago, in my youth, but never the way I’m crazy now”
- (46) *si eget, necessest nos pati: amavit – aequom ei factumst.* (Plaut. *Truc.* 222)  
“if he’s poor, we must bear it; he was in love, justice was done to him”
- b) *Amāv\** (+ object) with an explicit or implicit negation in the sense of “have never (yet) loved (someone or something)”

Here the situation is mirror-like to the previous type: the validity of the present state is not based on some one-time experience in the past, but rather on the fact that such an experience never occurred. It is a continual state of “non-existence”<sup>27</sup> in the past and in the present.<sup>28</sup>

- (47) *plusque amat quam te umquam amavit* (Plaut. *Epid.* 66)  
“and he loves her more than he’s ever loved you”

c) *Amāv\** (+ object) meaning “I appreciated”

The following four examples are of a completely different kind, where the verb *amāre* does not express a state, but has a dynamic, telic, momentaneous meaning. In fact, these perfects could be seen as belonging to the theoretically (and perhaps even factually – cf. note 20) existing inchoative *amāscō*.

- (48) *sed te amavi tamen admiratusque sum quod nihilo minus ad me tua manu scripsisses* (Cic. *Att.* 6,9,1)  
“yet I appreciated you (= your letter), and was astonished that you still wrote to me in your own hand”
- (49) *in Atilii negotio te amavi – quum enim sero venissem, tamen honestum equitem Romanum beneficio tuo conservavi* (Cic. *fam.* 13,62,1)

27 In this particular case, “non-existence” refers not to “non-existence of love as such”, but “non-existence of such a degree of love”.

28 Cf. examples (21) and (22) above.

“I appreciated you in the matter of Atilius – for though I was late, I was able, thanks to your kindness, to save a worthy Roman equestrian”

- (50) *delectarunt me tuae litterae, in quibus primum amavi amorem tuum, qui te ad scribendum incitavit verentem, ne Silius suo nuntio aliquid mihi sollicitudinis attulisset* (Cic. *fam.* 9,16,1)

“I was charmed by your letter, in which I especially appreciated your love, which made you write in fear that Silius might have caused me some trouble with his news”

- (51) *credo igitur hunc me non amare; at ego me amavi, quod mihi iam pridem usu non venit* (Cic. *Att.* 9,18,1)

“I believe this man does not love me; but I was pleased with myself, which has not happened to me for some time”

#### d) *Amāv\** as a denotation of a state that has ended in the past

- (52) *illum qui amarunt non amant* (Cic. *Att.* 9,13,4)

“those who loved Pompey no longer do”

A “state that has ended in the past” is a description that also fits examples (45) and (46). But the semantics here are different. Examples (45) and (46) represent intransitive *amāre* with the meaning “to experience love, to know what love is”. This example describes an affection (for a particular person) that has vanished. Another example of this type (that is: describing a transient feeling towards someone who has disappeared) is formulated in the imperfect (example (34)). Therefore, in this case, it is possible that pf. *amāvērunt* does not denote a state, but its beginning, i.e. not “those who loved Pompey” but “those who (originally/ initially) came to love Pompey” (it would therefore be the same as the examples in section c)).

## 2.3 Evaluation

Let us now attempt to summarize what follows from the analysis of the material and what contribution it can make to the resolution of traditional controversial questions concerning the meanings and uses of Latin verb tenses.

First, let us return to the traditional question of the default meaning of the Latin perfect indicative, which we personified above in point 1.2 by the names of A. Meillet, for whom the default meaning of the Latin perfect was *perfectum praesens*, and G. Serbat, for whom the default meaning is the historical perfect and who sees the *perfectum praesens* only as a residual phenomenon. The analysis of the stative verbs represented here by the prototypical *amāre* is definitely in favour of A. Meillet. However, this is not to say

anything more than that any general judgements are hardly possible, and that one must work consistently with an awareness of the differences created by the lexical semantics of the verbs. In our corpus, at least 18 of the 32 instances of the pf. (examples (1)–(11), (21)–(22), (43)–(47)) unambiguously have the meaning of *perfectum praesens* (and I would be inclined to add three more: examples (12)–(14); in my opinion, thus, it is 21 instances, i.e. 2/3 of all cases). Either six or eight instances (either examples (15)–(20) or (13)–(20)) describe a state that no longer exists at the time of utterance, not because it has ceased to exist, but because either the experiencer or the theme has ceased to exist. Four other cases (examples (48)–(51)) have the meaning “I appreciated; it pleased me”; that is, they refer to the beginning of a state. Strictly speaking, then, it is not the past tense of a predicate of the class of “states”, but of a predicate of the class of “achievements”. One single case (example (52)) describes an event that has ended for internal reasons and is anterior to another event, which should in fact be the default meaning of the Latin indicative perfect according to Serbat and certainly according to the mainstream position.

Second, regarding the virtual dispute personified by Varro and Charisius in 1.2, namely which of the two tenses (impf. or pf.) actually represents the *praeteritum*: here it is clearly true that in the type of verbs we are examining, *praeteritum* is expressed by the imperfect. Particularly clear are the cases of “bounded” *amāre* denoting romantic affection (examples (29)–(34)), where the impf. is simply the unmarked past tense (*illam amabam olim...*). In the case of the “unbounded” *amāre*, we might observe a certain common pragmatic feature of implicit contradiction (which is also evident in other verbs, e.g. *dicēbam* vs. *dixi*) – but this question would need to be examined on a much wider sample. Another issue that is only hinted at in this study is the use of the impf. ind. in the sense of *irrealis* (examples (38)–(41)).

Third, as to the question of whether the notion of anteriority/simultaneity or perfectivity/imperfectivity is more important for the Latin aspect-tense system, our examples show that in the case of the verb *amāre*, relative tense is not a contrastive feature at all. The imperfect *amābā\** appears even in cases that we would routinely classify as “anterior” (*perierunt illa, quae amabas*). In the numerous cases where the verb *amāre* denotes love as a permanent quality, without beginning or end, anteriority cannot even be imagined. Where *amāre* denotes love with a possible end (“to be in love”), only in one attested case can *amāv\** be considered to denote anteriority (*qui amarunt, non amant*; unless the pf. here has an ingressive sense). All other cases are clearly aspectual: *amāv\** expresses an overall view of the situation, not anteriority.<sup>29</sup> (Recall that other forms clearly expressing anteriority, that is, plsqpf., fut. II and conj. pf., do not appear in our corpus at all.)

29 In the briefest possible way, we can compare it all with the verb *scire* ‘to know’, which is also (perhaps even more so) seen as prototypical of the category of “state”, and which I have also analysed (but cannot fit it all in one paper, and will present separately elsewhere). As was already mentioned in 2.1, the “state of affairs” represented by the verb *scire* has a slightly different internal temporal structure from what we have seen with the verb *amāre*: it has a distinct beginning – “to learn”, followed by a state that is permanent and has no end (there is no “un-learning”; there may be some gradual “forgetting”, but that is a different “state of affairs”).

The verb *scire* is even more frequent in both authors than the verb *amāre*; it occurs in a total of 718 instances in Plautus and 1220 instances in Cicero, with only 15 instances in the *perfectum* system in Plautus

Fourth, it remains to be commented on whether it is meaningful to distinguish different types of states within the class of states on the basis of their implicit (un)boundedness. I believe that it is: a specific feature of bounded states is that their perfect indicative may denote the beginning of a state, which is – logically – irrelevant in the case of an unbounded state. The meaning of the perfect indicative in unbounded states is thus more limited – or more explicit: it is the *perfectum praesens*, except when the experiencer or theme itself has ceased to exist. At the same time, we have identified a difference in the use of the impf. ind.: while in the case of the bounded state the imperfect simply has the meaning of the preterite, in the case of the unbounded state we have observed a feature of implicit contradiction; this issue, however, requires further investigation.

This article has more of a methodological purpose. It does not so much aim to report on the meanings of the imperfect and perfect forms of the verb *amāre*, as it aims, through this case study, to answer the question of why the descriptions of the Latin aspect-tense system in grammars are not entirely satisfactory and what might help to produce more convincing results. This, in my opinion, is a much more refined classification on the side of lexical semantics and a systematic description of the interactions of all types of elements involved in aspect and of their hierarchy. This paper is meant to be one piece in this mosaic.

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and 23 instances in Cicero. Overall, therefore, the use of the forms of the *perfectum* system for this verb is even more rare than for *amāre*. The ratio of impf. act. ind. : pf. act. ind. is 11 : 13 in Plautus and 59 : 10 in Cicero. The pf. ind. is thus obviously much more limited in total, and in fact even more so, since 5 of the 23 cases have a completely different meaning: it is a legal term with the meaning 'voted for, decreed'. The 6 other instances of the form *scīv\** refer to the beginning of the state: it has the meaning 'I learned' (in the case of the verb *amāre*, the meaning 'I fell in love' would correspond to it, but we have no attestation of this in Plautus and Cicero, unless the examples (27) and (32) have this meaning). The other two cases clearly have the meaning of present state (one of them often quoted in grammars – Plaut. *Poen.* 724: *Eum vos meum esse servom scītis? – Scīvimus.*). For the remaining eight cases, the interpretation is mostly disputed: e.g., two cases include the phrase *iam pridem scīvi*, where it is not entirely clear whether this means 'I learned a long time ago' or 'I have known for a long time', i.e., whether the adverbial *iam pridem* indicates an answer to the question "when?" or "for how long?". This shows, among other things, the impossibility of using standard tests for distinguishing types of verbs through their combinability with certain types of temporal adverbials: for many Latin adverbials we are not certain of their precise meaning. Only in a total of six cases can the meaning of the form *scīv\** be even considered as indicating a state in the past (i.e., the meaning otherwise conveyed by the imperfect ind. of this verb); and in not a single case is the anteriority emphasized (which is natural, since, as noted, this "state of affairs" has no end).

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