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On Verbal Structure and the Hebrew Verb

1. The paper is intended to re-examine the nature of the verb as a linguistic category and restate the principles underlying verbal syntax.

2. Verbs have been characterized by their inflexional morphemes, or as forms including the signification of time, or as being connected with notions of “process”, or “event” or “action” etc. (as against nouns, which should indicate “substance” or the like). Such characterizations persist in linguistics in spite of their known shortcomings.

3. The common identification of ‘verb’ with ‘predicate’, which is read into Aristotle, is still the same in the formula $S \rightarrow NP + VP$. An important achievement was the analysis of finite verb as being equivalent to $\epsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}/est +$ participial attribute: *homo currit = homo est currens* etc. (Aristotle, Petrus Hispanus, Grammar of Port-Royal, James Harris, K.F. Becker, W. v. Humboldt, K.W.L. Heyse, Ch. Bally); cf. the “formation rule” $Verb \rightarrow Aux + V$.

4. Predication is both (a) a liaison and (b) an expression of an argument. It has usually been termed after its connective function (ref. to Aristotle, Boetius, al-Fārābī, Jespersen).

5. The copula as well is usually termed after its function as a connector. It has been regarded either as a link-form that does not belong to the *termini* of the sentence (cf. Boetius, H. Paul, Ščerba, E. Bach, J. Lyons) or as an auxiliary which is the formal nucleus of the predicate (e.g. Becker and followers, Jespersen, Bally, Tesnière, J.R. Ross). ‘Copula’ when meant as the abstract notion of nexus (v.

Heyse) is expressed through the synthesis itself of the pronominal subject and the attribute within a verb-form. Otherwise the copular verb may accordingly be required.

7. Morphologically exclusive copula-forms are functioning much like verbs *to be*; so also are expressions of existence employed as copulas (Hebrew *yeš*, *eyn*). Pronouns that are considered to be copulas are in fact resumptive prons.

8. Inflexional morphemes or analogous pronominal markers form integral part of the verbal complex regardless of form. A finite verb is a nexus-complex (or a "sentence-word"); it is never formally a 'part of the sentence', but the nucleus of a sentence.

9. In the construction of Nominal Subject + Verb the initial noun is actually in extraposition, resumed in the personal index of the verb-complex.

10. A verb-form minus its personal marker is virtually nominal. Especially in Semitic languages verb-forms were recognized as contracted nominal sentences (Zaḡḡāḡī, W. Wright, C. Hodge).

11. Verb-forms, containing the person morpheme and the 'attribute', mark the predicative nexus by their internal morphological cohesion. Processes of agglutination may bring into play various degrees of verbalization (cf. D. Cohen).

12. A finite verb is a predicational complex comprising at least three constituents: (1) indication of person, (2) lexeme expressing the predicate, and (3) predicative nexus. To show that the constituents of the verb-complex are autonomous in their syntactic behaviour, the verb is here examined as to (a) the negative, (b) extraposition, (c) focusing, (d) nominalization, and (e) adverbial complementation. It is found that it is not the verb as such that passes through these operations, but its constituents. Negation of the personal constituent is not like that of the predicative contents, both to be distinguished from negation of the nexus.

13. Constituents of the verb are here examined in the negative, in Hebrew expressions, where negation variously applies to the person, the attribute, or the nexus.

14. Extraposition as well is shown to be different when referring

to the person, the attribute, or (in some languages) to the nexus.

15. Focusing, or “la mise en vedette”, of each of the constituents of the verb differs from that of the others.

16. (a) Nominalizations of the verb when centred on the personal element is commonly represented by the participle (or the equivalent relative clause); (b) nominalization of the attribute may be expressed through an internal object or parallel syntactic equivalent; (c) nominalization of the nexus will take the form of infinitive or abstract noun, or a *that*-clause: ‘we succeeded’: (a) → ‘we who succeeded’ (‘we successors’); (b) → ‘our success’ (‘the success which we succeeded’, its nature, quality etc.); (c) → ‘our success’, ‘the fact that we succeeded’.

17. (a) Adverbial complements referring to the person are circumstantials whose *ṣāhib al-ḥāl* is the verbal agent (or its *nā’ib*); (b) referring to the attribute are the qualitative adverbials, and (c) referring to the nexus are the adverbial expressions of time, place, cause, result, etc.