

It is a fact that John sang the Marseillaise.  
His being able to sing well is a fact.

From these we even can form compound nominals like:

the fact that John sang the Marseillaise  
the fact of his being able to sing well

which, once more, can enter container contexts. As to *result*:

John's being able to sing is the result of long training.  
That he sang the Marseillaise was the result of drinking five martinis.

This last example shows, incidentally, that the things denoted by such nominals can not only be results but can also *have* results: we mentioned the result of John's drinking five martinis.

The phrase I just used—"we mentioned the result"—reminds us of the indirect proof I promised a while ago. This proof consists in showing that container elements—nouns, verbs, and adjectives—that fit one class of nominals fit each other as well. Indeed, results and facts, to stick to our paradigms, can be mentioned, denied, or remembered. Similarly, both facts and results may surprise us. We also can talk of facts or results causing other things. As to adjectives, it is obvious that all three paradigms cheerfully take *result*: many results are unlikely, probable or certain, not to mention possible, useful or even true results. *Fact* is more selective, but this is understandable in view of the strong achievement-sense of this word: remember that *true fact* is redundant and *false fact* is a contradiction. But this is a different story. At any rate, the indirect proof seems to work, and it will gain in impressiveness as we shall be able to compare and contrast the container family belonging to

imperfect nominals with that belonging to perfect nominals. The collection of this latter one is the next item on our agenda.

5.8. A battery of perfect nominals can be given by the following selection:

the singing of the Marseillaise  
the beautiful singing  
John's singing of the Marseillaise.

As we look for adjectives and prenominal or postnominal verbs that apply to these forms, we must not be disturbed by the fact that a good many of the container elements associated with imperfect nominals are also applicable here. I explained above that by the use of paraphrastic transforms we can clear up the muddle. What we have to look for here are narrow containers applicable to perfect nominals only.

Most of the adjectives meeting this requirement will belong to the class I shall  $A_3$ 's,<sup>6</sup> of which *slow*, *fast*, *sudden*, *gradual*, and *prolonged* are typical instances. It is clear that their role is quite different from the role of adjectives characterizing imperfect nominals. Compare:

John's singing is possible.  
John's singing is slow.

The first has the transform

It is possible that he sings

but the second does not have

\*It is slow that he sings.

The second sentence, on the other hand, turns into

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 7.