Distinctions between stage-level and individual-level predicates (*Firemen are available.* [stage-level]/*Firemen are altruistic.* [individual-level]) are often discussed in terms of deriving syntax from differences in argument structure (Deising 1992, Kratzer 1995). However, the variable behavior of a large number of predicates in addition to the ease with which many predicates coerce suggests that the differences in interpretation are not due to the (fixed) lexical semantics of words themselves. If lexical information is not responsible for the stage-level/individual-level distinction, what then is? A possible answer, noted but rarely explored in the literature, concerns the particular interaction of the stage-level/individual-level distinction and inner aspect/aktionsart, suggesting that the two phenomena are linked. The present analysis argues that stage-level stative predicates, temporally bounded in a way individual-level stative predicates are not, involve a semantic notion of culmination, here to be realized by functional structure drawn from the syntax of aspect. This approach explains the interaction of the stage-level/individual-level distinction with inner aspect by arguing that there are two types of syntactically distinct statives whose interpretations are derived from properties commonly used only within the eventive domain.

A critical pattern noted but unexplored in the literature is the interaction of the stage-level/individual-level distinction with inner aspect (although, see Schmitt 1992, 2001 for discussion of aspect in copula constructions).

(1)  
  a. John is intelligent. (individual-level stative)  
  b. John is happy. (stage-level stative)  
  c. #John is being intelligent. (individual-level eventive)  
  d. John is being happy. (stage-level eventive)  

(2)  
  a. The concrete is hard. (individual-level stative)  
  b. The pond is empty. (stage-level stative)  
  c. #The concrete hardened. (individual-level eventive)  
  d. The pond emptied. (stage-level eventive)  

It appears that individual-level eventives are not possible, as the reading is always stage-level. Generalizing from (1) and (2), individual-level predicates are barred in eventive contexts, but stage-level predicates are permitted in stative contexts. Thus inner aspect affects the possible realizations of a predicate’s level. Given the success of structural analyses of inner aspect (see Rosen 1999 for a review), this analysis extends the primitives used in the syntax of inner aspect, asking how far explanations of an aspectual nature can go in deriving the stage-level/individual-level distinction.

This approach explains the interaction of the stage-level/individual-level distinction with inner aspect by arguing that there are two distinct types of statives, a nonculminative (atelic) stative which is interpreted as individual-level, and a culminate (telic) stative which is interpreted as stage-level. Focusing on stage-level stative predicates, this approach argues that aspectual structure is embedded in stage-level stative predicates, linking their temporal boundedness to the event argument of the state.
Assuming Kennedy (1999), this proposal links DegP in the adjectival domain and #P in the nominal domain, claiming that both involve quantity and thus license a quantity structure in the verbal domain. The analysis starts from connections drawn between the scalar structure of adjectives and telicity (Hays, Kennedy, and Levin 1999, Kennedy & Levin 2002). Closed scale adjectives induce telic interpretations while open scale adjective do not (They are straightening the rope. [closed scale, telic] / They are widening the road. [open scale, atelic]). It is argued that closed scalar structure, which acts as a quantity measure, licenses a bounded aspectual interpretation of the state described, giving rise to the stage-level interpretation.

Additionally, subject effects found in the stage-level/individual-level distinction are also conditioned by the scalar structure of adjectives.

(3) a. People are intelligent. (open scale, generic/*existential)
   b. Concrete is hard. (open scale, generic/*existential)
   c. People are happy. (closed scale, generic/existential)
   d. Ponds are empty. (closed scale, generic/existential)

Those predicates with closed scale adjectives allow for an existential interpretation of subjects which is barred when the adjective is of open scale. Independently, the event phrase of aspectual syntax (Travis 1994, Borer 2005) has been argued to license the existential interpretation of subjects. The present analysis argues that the event phrase is licensed to project only when the aspectual phrase has been quantized in stative predicates. This analysis also extends to verbal statives.

(4) a. People own houses. (generic/*existential)
   b. People own the house. (generic/existential)
   c. The people own houses. (generic/existential)
   d. The people own the house. (generic/existential)

If either the internal or external argument is a quantized DP, the existential interpretation of the subject is licensed and stage-level interpretation results. Individual-level interpretation is only allowed when no quantity structure is available.

Considered together, the structural distinction between stage-level and individual-level predicates involves aspectual projections, including an aspectual phrase controlling the culmination of the predicate and an event phrase controlling existential interpretation of the subject. Thus the stage-level/individual-level distinction is derived from aspect. Statives which embed an aspectual projection licensed by the presences of a quantity structure are interpreted as stage-level, while those that do not are interpreted as individual-level. The projection of aspectual structure allows for stage-level interpretation. Without these projections, no temporal event structure is licensed and individual-level interpretation results by default. Thus individual-level eventives are barred as a result of the projection of aspectual structures, since the presence of aspectual structures would link them to event times.