CONCEPTS OF THE TERM WORD
IN THE ENCYCLOPEDIE

by

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ABSTRACT

That the eighteenth century was a period of changing ideas is a proposition as true when applied to questions of language as it is when applied to other fields of intellectual endeavour. Grammatical studies were still closely related to philosophy, as they had been for some centuries. The rationalism of the seventeenth century had resulted in the strictly logical exposition of grammatical theories whose aim was to produce a normative means of teaching the 'art de bien parler'. With this rationalist approach arose the theory of a grammaire générale and its attempts to reduce the grammatical facts of all languages to logical terms. Although the eighteenth century aimed rather at teaching the 'art de bien penser', the idea of a rationally-based grammaire générale persisted as the foundation for most grammatical description, and actually reached its highest point of development in the siècle des lumières. Empiricism and the sensationalist philosophy of Condillac were slow to affect the techniques of grammatical enquiry and description.

After outlining these trends in grammatical description, our study continues by examining the eighteenth-century grammarians' concepts of the word, attempting to relate them to the philosophical and scientific shift from rationalism to empiricism. The Encyclopédie, in which may be found the grammatical doctrines of Dumarsais and Beauzée, is shown to contain two distinct approaches to this subject, both of which treat the word as the smallest meaningful unit of language and as the basic element

of grammatical description. Whereas Dumarsais looked upon the word as essentially a logical element dependent on semantic and rational criteria, Beauzée is shown to have based his concept on empirical linguistic facts, and to have considered the word as a sign (exhibiting the dichotomy of expression and content) whose meaning is both semantic and functional. Like de Saussure at the turn of this century, Beauzée posited paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations dependent on the existence of relative and negative oppositions within the word as a passive element of the lexicon and as a functional unit of language. In the process of his development of these relationships, Beauzée also came very near to establishing the modern concept of the morpheme.

The theories of Dumarsais and Beauzée are compared and contrasted and the conclusion drawn that Beauzée's empirical approach resulted in his being far more modern in his concept of the word and in his understanding of general language problems than Dumarsais.

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Chapter 1

THE BACKGROUND TO LANGUAGE STUDIES IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

Throughout the ages men have discussed language and have been fascinated by the problems with which, upon even cursory examination, it besets the inquiring mind. In the course of the centuries, the questions which men have asked concerning language have ranged from the naïvely simple to the philosophically complex. Problems which are now considered to be totally insoluble were examined along with those which were partially answerable, and it was not until the relatively recent appearance of linguistics as an autonomous field of scientific endeavour that the scope of linguistic enquiry was limited to what we may call the 'knowable.'

Since language is an ever-present social phenomenon, it is to be expected that many of the questions to which it gives rise should have been asked time and time again since man first devoted his attention to its problems. It is further to be expected that the diverse answers to these perennial questions have often closely reflected the philosophical and scientific thought and presuppositions of the historical period that produced them. In short, linguistic enquiry, like historical, scientific or moral enquiry, tends to mirror the intellectual climate of an age.

No age points to the truth of this statement more clearly than does the eighteenth century in France. Language was a vital issue in this century of vital issues, and arguments on the subject ranged from the most profound to the trivial and

quibbling. The eighteenth century attempted to find answers to questions dealing with everything from the very origin of language to the exact classification of parts of speech. Philosophers, chemists, political and social scientists, literary figures--all had their 'linguistic' opinions. The outstanding writers of the period who did not contribute in some degree to the massive literature on the problems of language are the exception.

A large number of questions of a very general nature were discussed throughout the century. Thus the problem of the origin of language, reflecting the ancient argument of 'natural' versus 'conventional' language, demonstrated the century's changing attitudes to the discussion of revealed religion versus natural religion. Theories of catastrophic change gave way to empirically-founded theories of slow evolutionary change.[1] Beauzée, for example, claimed that language was a God-given gift,[2] while Condillac asserted that it was man's gradually developed answer to necessity. Reason, and the presence of innate ideas, were posited by some (Desmarais, Dumarsais, Restaut) as the foundation of this slow evolution, while others (Condillac, Diderot, de Brosses) saw man's sensations as its sole basis, with no part played by reason. While some writers upheld onomatopoeia as a basic factor in man's first speech utterance, others supported the claim of the interjection. The attempted explanations of language diversity brought the story of Babel into dispute, and while the Biblical account had its champions, there were again

those who would accept only the process of slow change.

The question of the 'natural order' of language provoked discussion by many of the century's thinkers. Those who claimed that logic was the basis of word-order found themselves opposed by the empirical sensationalism of Condillac and his followers. Many writers were concerned about the possible decay of language, and particularly of French, and their concern gave rise to attempts to fix the language semantically, grammatically and structurally.[3] As a concomitant to these attempts there arose a conservative purism in language, quite opposed to the innovating spirit which had pervaded the purism of the preceding century[4] (as represented for example, by Vaugelas). Dictionaries proliferated, lending importance to the discussion of the problems of definition,[5] while the steadily increasing body of scientific knowledge gave urgency to the controversy on the necessary dangers of neologism.

Travel and exploration were two factors which contributed to the increase in knowledge concerning language. The opening up of the Orient led to the recognition that the diversity of languages was even greater than had been suspected in the preceding centuries. This new awareness of their immense diversity of form and structure led to the evaluation and comparison of languages. However, such comparative studies can not be likened to those which are so typical of the following century. As might be expected, the eighteenth century based its

comparisons on what the modern linguist would call 'metaphysical' criteria. Concurrently with these attempts at evaluation and comparison there existed a didactic spirit which pervaded most of the discussions about language. The diversity of languages provoked an increasing interest in the problems of communication. Large numbers of grammar texts were published and the teaching of foreign languages was widely discussed. In fact, some of the century's greatest exponents of linguistic argument were closely connected with education, and devoted much of their time to the investigation of the principles and methods of language-teaching.[6] The practicability of a universal language was also discussed, eventually to be rejected by the idéologues.

The general questions which we have here enumerated were, as we have said, common to the century as a whole. Those who contributed to their discussion varied greatly in their background and interests. Their claim to consideration frequently rested on no better grounds than the fact that they were language users and that their arguments were therefore of more or less equal validity. However, through such diverse and often irrelevent discussion there ran a stable core of linguistic fact and grammatical authority protected by the grammairiens-philosophes.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, grammar and the grammatical treatise were firmly ensconced as the basis of all serious language-study. We need look no further than the

the seventeenth century and the works of Vaugelas and Port-Royal to find their immediate source. The grammatical theories of the eighteenth century were, as we shall see, heavily influenced by those of the preceding century. However, there was a distinctly perceivable trend in grammatical developments, and the Encyclopédie both reflected its course and formed a point within its evolution. The Encyclopédie's hundreds of articles on grammar, published over a period of twenty years, not only embraced topical arguments, but gave new consideration to those of preceding centuries. Its exposition of these arguments marked the zenith of a particular trend started years earlier and also indicated the beginning of new intellectual trends in grammatical thought.

The grammatical theories of the grammairiens-philosophes stemmed directly from those of the seventeenth century, and particularly from the Grammaire de Port-Royal. This work had itself been a turning-point in the seventeenth century and it reflected the impact of Cartesian principles. Throughout Descartes' century the approach to grammar had been normative. The grammarian's purpose was didactic; it was his function to prescribe the 'art de bien parler', and he chose as his norm the 'bon usage' of the court. Arnauld and Lancelot were no less normative in their approach to grammar, and they made no attempt to overthrow the dictates of 'bon usage'. However, influenced as they were by Cartesian thought, they set out to show that the

authority of 'bon usage' was reliable because it was based solidly in reason itself. Sahlin aptly summed up the difference between the attitudes to grammar before and after 1660 when she wrote:

> La grammaire avant 1660 peut être resumée en "dites!--ne dites pas!", et ces règles visaient à la correction et la pureté du style établies d'après le goût personnel de l'auteur ou d'après un certain milieu social. Ce n'était donc pas une grammaire descriptive désintéressée. Celle des grammairiens philosophes l'est encore moins, mais sa manière d'être didactique, lorsqu'elle s'occupe de règles pratiques, est plutôt: "dites!--et voici pourquoi", sinon: "voici ce qu'exige la raison--donc, dites!" 7

Reason had become the basis on which all grammatical study was founded, and it was this fact that gave rise to the grammaire générale. As all men reason the same way, and as reason is the foundation on which language rises, all languages must have some common underlying principles, principles which, according to Beauzée, "sont d'une vérité immuable et d'un usage universel."[8] With the enthronement of reason and the rise of the grammaire générale, questions of grammar came face to face with questions of logic in the same way as they had done in the grammatical theory of the Ancients and of the medieval speculative grammarians.[9] Both the normative rules of the grammarian and the description of the grammatical facts of language had therefore to submit to the laws of reason. The view of universal grammar was to affect grammatical theory throughout the eighteenth century and in the works of the grammairiens-philosophes of the early and mid-century, and to influence as well the writings of the

idéologues towards the century's close. However, between the appearance of the Grammaire de Port-Royal and that of the Encyclopédie, two foreign philosophers were to propose additional theories which also affected the trends of eighteenth-century linguistic thought.

Locke's assertion of the primacy of sensation in man's attainment of knowledge influenced not only the course of all philosophical enquiry but that of linguistic enquiry as well. Whereas language up to this time had been regarded merely as a means of expressing thought, it was seen during the eighteenth century as playing an essential rôle in epistemological theory. The Scholastics and the neo-Aristotelians may well have asked themselves whether language is a reflection of reality or whether reality is the exteriorization of the mind's idea. The eighteenth century would ask not only whether language is prior to thought or vice-versa, but also whether thought or even sensation is possible without language. Thus, Condillac's sensationalism reduced thought and its concomitant, language, to the decomposition of sensation. He attempted to show that the mind plays no active part in the formulation of thought, and that Locke's theory of reflection was unnecessary. Condillac's followers were determined to take these theories to their logical conclusion, and, at the century's close, we therefore find Cabanis asking whether indeed it is possible, without language which proceeds from the four non-cognitive "opérations de l'ame", to

have sensation at all. Reason and logic may govern the form of language, but the prime mover of speech is sensation.

The second foreigner to influence French linguistic thought was Leibniz. Despite his own work on language, his influence on linguistic theory comes rather from his contribution to logical theory. Port-Royal's appeal to reason, and consequently to logic, as a criterion of grammatical correctness, had brought the concept of the logical proposition to the fore. The Aristotelian proposition which formed the basis of Port-Royal's analysis of thought was essentially one of qualitative affirmation (or negation); that is to say, the speaker affirmed (or denied) that the subject of the proposition was included within the idea of the predicate. Leibniz introduced the theory of identity to the logical proposition, whereby the subject is seen to exist within the idea of the predicate and the predicate is included within the idea of the subject, resulting in a relationship of identity. This theory, as we shall see, was to have a major effect upon the grammatical analysis of the century's most outstanding grammarien-philosophe, Dumarsais.

Despite the various influences which arose to modify it, the grammaire générale dominated all grammatical theories throughout the century. We have observed that it stemmed from a rationalist approach to language analysis. Its appeal was wide-spread, no doubt because of its universality of application, but also because the pedagogues saw in it a device for teaching

all languages. Teaching a pupil the principles of general grammar would, in their opinion, lay the groundwork for the learning of languages in general. Mastery of a foreign language would then require only the learning of the various means of achieving the syntactical differences of construction. Such a theory of universal grammar found obvious support in the ambitions of those who hoped to develop a simple, logical, universal language. Later, however, with the passing of the years and the rise of the mechanistic theory of language (stemming from the analysis of the sense perceptions), the theory of universal grammar found an additional amd very different support. Reason, and the universality of reason, in which the principles of the grammaire générale had been rooted, was accorded a more minor role; it was henceforth to the universality of the senses that the possibility of a grammaire générale owed its existence.

This trend away from rationalism and toward empiricism had quite specific effects on the study of grammar. Under the influence of rationalism, the main tools of grammatical analysis had been reason and logic. The decomposition of thought was believed to dictate the necessary form of language. The principal purpose of language was the analysis of thought. Since words reflect thought, the question of meaning became all-important and theories of grammar and of the part played by words were influenced by semantic considerations. For the sensationalists, on the other hand, the purpose of language was to communicate

thought. Language therefore formed part of a system of knowledge. An investigation of logic and meaning could, for the anti-rationalists, form only one element of the analysis of language.

The main contributors to the Encyclopédie on questions of language were Dumarsais and Beauzée.[10] The hundreds of articles dealing with all aspects of language reflect this drift from rationalism to empiricism. The grammaire générale based on logic and reason reached its highest point of development with the work of Dumarsais. Upon the latter's death, Beauzée undertook the completion of the articles on grammar, and, although there is no immediately and startingly apparent change in the theories propounded, we shall see that with Beauzée's work, new ideas and attitudes crept in to modify the use of logic as a tool of grammatical analysis.

Whatever the basis for grammatical analysis, eighteenth-century theories had at least one major point in common. The smallest unit of referential meaning to form part of these analyses was the word. Words combined to reflect or to communicate thought. Furthermore, despite the different definitions of the word, we shall see that all the grammarians of the century had great difficulty in divorcing the idea of "word" from the idea of "written word". Despite these difficulties, we shall see that the Encyclopédie contains at least two fairly involved concepts of the word. One of these concepts will be seen to be implicit in the form of grammatical description, while the other is most explicitly and fully stated.

1
Theories of slow evolutionary change based on empirical observation were also being posited to explain the physical changes in the earth's surface.

2
Nicolas Beauzée, Encyclopédie raisonnée ou dictionnaire des arts et des métiers (1751 - 1765) article "Langue", IX, 253

All page references to articles will refer to the first edition of the Encyclopédie. The original punctuation is maintained.

3
Diderot, article "Encyclopédie", V, 637
In reference to the aims of the Encyclopédie Diderot wrote:
Mais la connaissance de la langue est le fondement de toutes ces grandes espérances; elles resteront incertaines, si la langue n'est fixée et transmise à la postérité dans toute sa perfection; et cet objet est le premier de ceux dont il convenait à des Encyclopédistes de s'occuper profondément.

4
Ferdinand Brunot, Histoire de la langue française des origines à 1900, VI, 2, p. 871
"Enfin et surtout, le purisme de Vaugelas était un purisme rajeunisseur qui faisait volontiers le sacrifice de la langue en train de vieillir, tandis que le purisme que nous appellerons voltairien, est un purisme essentiellement conservateur, tourné vers les monuments du passé."

5
D'Alembert, article "Dictionnaire", IV, 959
" . . . comme les définitions consistent à expliquer un mot par un ou plusieurs autres, il resulte nécessairement de-là qu'il est des mots qu'on ne doit jamais définir, puisqu' autrement toutes les définitions ne formeraient plus qu'une espece de cercle vicieux, dans lequel un mot serait expliqué par un autre mot qu'il aurait servi à expliquer lui-même."

6
Dumarsais, Beauzée and Condillac were all teachers or tutors at some time in their lives.

7
Gunvor Sahlin, César Chesneau du Marsais et son rôle dans l'évolution de la grammaire générale, (Paris, 1928) p. 44

8
Beauzée, article "Grammaire", VII, 841

9
R. H. Robins, Ancient and mediaeval grammatical theory in Europe (London, 1951)

G. L. Bursill-Hall, "Mediaeval grammatical theories," CJL/RCL, IX, I (1963), pp. 40 - 54

10

César Chesneau du Marsais was born in Marseille in 1676. He was brought up in the Oratoire de Marseille. In 1704 he moved to Paris where he was married and became an advocate. His marriage was not successful and he left his wife. His profession did not bring the rewards that he had hoped for so he abandoned it. He was private tutor successively to the sons of the président de Maisons, of Law and of the Marquis de Beauffrement. When this employment ended he found it necessary to run a private school in order to live. He became associated with the authors of the Encyclopédie and undertook to provide the articles on grammar. Before his death in 1756 he had completed one hundred and fifty articles. His main works on language were:

Exposition d'une méthode raisonnée pour apprendre la langue latine (1722)
Traité des tropes (1730)
Logique (1769)

Nicolas Beauzée was born in Verdun in 1717. He was a student of mathematics before becoming interested in language. In 1756 he took over the task of completing the grammatical articles for the Encyclopédie. His Grammaire générale ou exposition raisonnée du langage pour servir à l'étude de toutes langues was published in 1767 and resulted in his appointment to the chair of grammar at the Ecole Royale Militaire. In 1772 he was elected to the Académie française as the successor to Duclos. He died in 1789.

Chapter 2

THE WORD AS AN ELEMENT OF LOGIC

We have said that the theory of a grammaire générale developed from the grammatical works of Port-Royal and that it reached its highest point of development with the work of Dumarsais. In the course of this development the didactic purposes which underlay the various theories showed a slight change of emphasis. Whereas the seventeenth-century grammarians sought to teach the art de bien parler, their colleagues of the following century aimed more at expounding the art de bien penser. The grammaire générale was looked upon as a teaching tool, and as a result of this view its influence was felt on grammatical descriptions of specific languages. Language was treated not so much as a means of communication but as a means of exteriorizing thought. It was therefore thought and the logical processes which it involves that formed the basis of all grammatical analysis.

Port-Royal had based its rules of grammar on the analysis of the logical proposition, and this in turn had led to a confusion of logical and grammatical terms. It was Dumarsais who showed that there is a clear-cut distinction to be made between the logical proposition and the grammatical proposition. This in fact was one of his major contributions to grammatical theory. To Dumarsais, thought, that raw material which must be decomposed and analysed, exists instantaneously in the mind; that is to say, it is in no way "linear." He wrote: "Nous savons

par sentiment intérieur, que chaque acte particulier de la faculté de penser, ou chaque pensée singuliere, est excitée en nous en un instant, sans division, et par une simple affection intérieure de nous-mêmes."[1] Every such thought must undergo a process of decomposition and analysis, and it is this process which gives rise, in his view, to the elements of the logical proposition and to their logical order within that proposition. The logical relationships in which the parts of the logical proposition stand with each other are then reflected in the grammatical proposition. This in turn is simply a construction made up of words which reflect the logical facts by means of order and syntax. The grammatical proposition is therefore: "un assemblage de mots [i.e. a construction], qui, par le concours des différens rapports qu'ils ont entr'eux [i.e. the syntactic arrangement], énoncent un jugement ou quelque considération particuliere de l'esprit, qui regarde un objet comme tel"[2] [i.e. the logical proposition].

In our attempt to isolate Dumarsais' theory of the word, it will first be necessary to further analyze his ideas about logical propositions. These he classifies into two main groups. The first is the proposition directe which reflects a judgment on the part of the person thinking. "Ces propositions marquent un état réel de l'objet dont on juge."[3] As an example he gives: "La terre tourne autour du soleil," which is an affirmative judgment. That it is a judgment is signalled in the grammatical

proposition by the use of that element of syntax known as the indicative mood. The second group consists of the proposition oblique which is not a judgment, but an enunciation. It does not reflect the état réel but rather the state or condition sought after. This is seen in the imperative and in certain of what are traditionally called the subordinate clauses. Thus, soyez sage and afin que vous soyez sage are examples of the proposition oblique. Propositions of these two groups may combine to give what Dumarsais calls the période. (Dumarsais, and later Condillac, made a detailed examination of the types of subordinate logical and grammatical propositions, but the two main groups outlined above are sufficient for our purposes.)

We have seen that the grammatical proposition is "un assemblage de mots", that is, a construction, whose elements, words, reflect the logical relations which must exist within one of the above logical propositions. The construction's means of establishing these relationships depend on the particular grammatical devices of the individual language. Thus, accepi litteras tuas, tuas litteras accepi, and litteras tuas accepi, reflect a single logical proposition with the same syntactical relationships. The resulting diverse constructions stem from Latin's use of inflections to achieve syntactical combination. (Beauzée pointed out that the same thing is of course not true of J'ai reçu tes lettres, and that although he was undoubtedly aware of the fact, Dumarsais nowhere stated that for some

languages construction is itself a syntactical reality.) Such constructions vary from language to language, depending on the syntactical means favored. Dumarsais was here of course differentiating between what we now know as the analytical and synthetic languages, which were known to the Encyclopédistes as langues analogues and langues transpositives (terms introduced by Girard[4]).

Dumarsais went on to claim that, even as thought is dependent on logic for its exteriorization as a logical proposition, so must the construction of the grammatical proposition be based on reason. Of all the possible constructions which can give form to thought, there must be one which reason dictates to be the most satisfactory. This construction must overide the mere syntactical conveniences with which a language may choose to establish relationships between its parts, and it must be equally applicable to synthetic and analytic languages.

This is Dumarsais' construction nécessaire (simple, naturelle). Because it is based on reason it must be universal in application. Its essence is word order; work inflection is merely another (and more artificial) means of achieving the relationships which reason dictates. The word order of the construction nécessaire necessitates the appearance of the subject first (il faut être avant d'opérer), the verb next (l'opération), followed by the complement (il faut exister avant de pouvoir être l'objet de l'action d'un autre). Adjectives

will necessarily follow nouns (il faut exister avant d'etre qualifie). Thus, although Latin uses inflections to establish relationships, the construction nécessaire of tuas litteras accepi should be accepi litteras tuas, for reason so dictates.[5]

Constructions which are not natural in the above sense are figurative. Ellipsis, pleonasm, syllepsis, and hyperbaton are constructions figurées. They have logical validity only because underlying each there must be a construction nécessaire. A language as it is spoken within a speech-community makes use of a third construction. This is the construction usuelle, which is a combination of the nécessaire and the figurée. However, since thought decomposed by reason is the basis of linguistic utterance, the analysis of all languages should be based on the construction nécessaire. Only by such analysis is it possible to reach the true logical relationships which are implicit in the very act of thought. In his grammatical analysis Dumarsais therefore required all grammatical relationships, in whatever form of construction, to be reduced to the necessary relationships which must exist in the full, simple, natural, necessary construction.

What then is the status of the word? For Dumarsais the word is necessarily an element which forms part of the grammatical proposition. Furthermore, as reflections of the logical proposition words are also logical elements designed to represent and characterize the various terms of the logical

proposition. Dumarsais himself clearly stated his understanding of the word as a logical element when he wrote:

> . . . ainsi nous divisions, nous analysons, comme par instinct, notre pensée; nous en rassemblons toutes les parties selon l'ordre de leurs rapports; nous lions ces parties à des signes, ce sont les mots dont nous nous servons ensuite pour en affecter les sens de ceux à qui nous voulons communiquer notre pensée: ainsi les mots sont en même temps, et l'instrument et le signe de la division de la pensée. 6

We see therefore that he himself defines the word as an instrument to be used in the analysis and decomposition of thought (that <u>action instantanée</u>) and as a sign, not of the thought, but of the elements which combine to make the thought. Since, as we have already shown, the thought is essentially a logical proposition, the word must be a logical element.

Words as mere signs or instruments existing within a non-functioning system of signs were of no interest to Dumarsais. There could be no logical function to these signs and no relationship between them of any consequence until they were considered as actively reflecting a process of thought occuring within the mind of the speaker. In his definition given above, the words <u>instruments</u> and <u>signes</u> are of far less significance than the word <u>pensée</u>. In the same way as the appeal to logic and reason led to the categorization of the various types of proposition, so was it logic and reason that formed the basis of his classification of words into parts of speech. We will consider this highly complicated classification only to the extent that it may help to further elucidate his theory of the word.

Words for Dumarsais, as for all followers of Port-Royal, could be divided into two main categories. They either represented un objet de la pensée or they reflected un point de vue de l'esprit. The first of these categories could be further divided into two sub-groups. These were the êtres réels and the êtres métaphysiques.

The êtres réels consisted of those words that reflected the exterior world of things. Words such as chien, arbre and homme for example, stem directly from the individual's cognition of the external world. Such cognition depends on a process of generalization, and Dumarsais made a careful exposition of the process by which a child generalizes his sense experiences. Although in doing this Dumarsais follows the same process used later by Condillac in his theories on the origin of language, Dumarsais made no claim to theorize on this question. The word was for him of no epistemological importance. Rather he attempted to show the process by which the institutionalized signs of a given speech-community are apprehended by the child.

The names of the êtres réels, those material objects of reality which impinge on the consciousness and sensations of the child, are first accepted as proper names. Thus, chien, applied to a certain four-footed animal, is accepted by the child as a proper name applicable only to one specific and individual animal. In the course of time however, the child hears the names animal and Médor also applied to this object

which he has learned to call chien. This specific and individual object now has three names. Experience teaches the child that chien may only be applied to a certain type of animal; it may not be applied to cheval or oiseau. Médor is the name of a specific chien, and animal, he discovers, is equally applicable to chien, cheval or oiseau. The child therefore generalizes his experience and realizes that there are three types of name: nom propre, nom d'espece and nom de genre.[7]

The process of generalization does not end here. The child further discovers that although animal is a nom de genre in relation to chien, cheval, oiseau etc., it is a nom d'espece in relation to être, "qui est le genre suprème".[8] It is the understanding of the differences which exist between the êtres réels that allows the child to arrive at an understanding of genre and espece, and with this understanding the child develops the ability to reason both deductively and inductively.

The êtres métaphysiques form the second sub-group of the objets de la pensée. Thus beauté, amour and blancheur do not exist in the external world of reality, but rather within the mind of man. But the child learns to think of them in the same way as he thinks of the êtres réels:

> L'usage où nous sommes tous les jours de donner des noms aux objets des idées qui nous représentent des êtres réels, nous a portés à en donner aussi par imitation aux objets métaphysiques des idées abstraites dont nous avons connaissance: ainsi nous en parlons comme nous faisons des objets réels; en sorte que l'ordre métaphysique a aussi ses noms d'especes et ses noms d'individus.... 9

The process is therefore one which is based on analogy, but it is now a process of abstraction rather than generalization. Names and classifications are given "à l'occasion de quelque affection intérieure. . ."[10] For example, blancheur does not exist within the object to which it is applied, nor does it in any way exist outside the speaker. Similarly, bonheur is an affection intérieure to which a name is given as though it existed as an être réel. Such words therefore abstract qualities or characteristics either from the world of reality or from the sense experience of the speaker.

The second major category, those words which reflect the points de vue de l'esprit are necessarily êtres métaphysiques, since they can not exist in the world of reality. This vue de l'esprit is found in the logical relations which pertain between the terms of the logical proposition. Thus, prepositions and conjunctions exist with the sole purpose of reflecting the relationships which the speaker wishes to set up between the terms of which he is speaking.

Such classification of words had an important effect on the whole of Dumarsais' grammatical analysis. It neatly set aside the problem of function words (such as prepositions and conjunctions) and at the same time provided the raison d'être of syntax. Since number, gender, mood and tense reflect a vue de l'esprit, they find their expression in the particular syntactical devices of the individual language. For Dumarsais

then, morphology (or more accurately the flectional devices) and syntax are also elements of logical function rather than grammatical function. Words, we must repeat, and by extension, syntax, are not elements which produce thought or which are even necessary to thought. They are necessary only as the instruments of the analysis of thought and as the signs of the logical exposition of that thought.

There is abundant further evidence that Dumarsais looked upon the word primarily as a logical element. Both the logical and the grammatical proposition are made up of subject and attribute. The relationship which must exist between these parts falls, according to Dumarsais, into one of two types: rapport d'identité and rapport de détermination. The introduction of these terms and what they stood for represented a major advance in the development of the grammaire générale from the days of Port-Royal. Seventeenth-century grammarians had had great difficulty in reconciling the agreement of adjective and noun in French. They readily recognized the grammatical fact, but had had difficulty in justifying it as a logical fact. To do so they had posited the rule of concordance.

According to this grammatical rule the logical reason for the agreement of terre and ronde in the proposition "la terre est ronde" was that the idea of terre was, following Aristotelian principles, included in the idea of roundness. We saw in our first chapter that Leibniz had subsequently introduced the

concept of identity to replace that of quality. It was this new approach that Dumarsais used to explain the facts logically and far more satisfactorily. For him, earth and roundness had a common identity because not only was the idea of earth included in that of roundness, but the idea of roundness was included in that of earth. Thus, the older idea of grammatical concordance between things which are logically disparate was replaced by the idea of logical unity based on common identity. (This is the basis for Dumarsais' classification of substantives and adjectives as species of the genus noun.)

In the same way, Dumarsais did away with the older idea of régime. He attacked the term on the grounds that it is abstract and that such abstract terms are only "des métaphores qui n'amusent que l'imagination."[11] The rapports de détermination with which he replaced it are those relationships which restrict the logical function of the word. The word lumen functions logically as a nom générique. When solis is added to it, its function is restricted to that of a nom spécifique. The same may be said of the French in la lumière du soleil. The words du soleil determine that la lumière functions as a nom spécifique (its function as logical and grammatical subject or object will be determined by other factors) and du itself determines and therefore restricts soleil.

These relationships of identity and determination played an important rôle in Dumarsais' classification of the parts of

speech. Even Beauzée made use of them in his definition of the parts of speech in his articles in the Encyclopédie, although, as we hope to demonstrate later, his concept of the word differed radically. A brief examination of several parts of speech will show how these logical criteria were applied.

The noun, which, as we have seen, is an être réel or an être métaphysique, will, according to its syntactic function within the construction, reflect its use as a subject or object. This particular use will reflect a logical attitude on the part of the speaker. However, logical points of view are not restricted solely to the logical function of the specific word within the proposition. For example, the function of the Latin noun within the proposition is shown by means of the inflection, but its gender and number, which certainly have no logical function as logical elements of the proposition, are factors which reflect rather the logical point of view of the speaker.

From this it follows that number and gender are determining factors which give specific yet partial information as part of the overall point of view from which the functioning noun is seen. We may therefore say that the inflection of the Latin noun puer (or its lack of it) tells us that its case is nominative or vocative, and that its function within the proposition is restricted. In addition, however, we know that it is singular and masculine, and these two characteristics reflect information about the user's point of view. The noun is there-

fore déterminé by its very nature, and Beauzée could define the noun thus: "Les noms sont des mots qui présentent à l'esprit des êtres déterminés par l'idée précise de leur nature."[12]

The adjective on the other hand is indéterminé. The adjectifs physiques, such as rond and pieux, and the adjectifs métaphysiques, such as ce, le and plusieurs, are indéterminés because they fail to reflect a specific point of view until they are related to a noun. Moreover, their addition to a noun does not in any way restrict their own logical function, but rather that of the noun. In the same way, verbs, with their number, tense and mood, reflect viewpoints which place restrictions not on themselves but on their subjects.

This same logical classification may be applied to those words whose basic function is to reflect a vue de l'esprit rather than an objet de la pensée. The preposition by itself is not only indéterminé, but it lacks all referential meaning. The addition of its complement leads to the restriction of that complement, and the relation of the phrase to an antecedent again leads only to the further determination of the antecedent and the complement. Beauzée makes use of a mathematical analogy to clarify this point. If, he claims, 3 is to 6 as 5 is to 10, 8 is to 16, 25 is to 50, etc., then the exponent of the relationship present is 1/2, when the terms are abstracted. Likewise, the phrases la main de Dieu, la colère de ce prince and les désirs de l'âme show a proportional relationship of their terms

when those terms are abstracted. The exponent of that relationship is the preposition de; the logical function of the preposition is to represent that relationship. Working from this logical basis Beauzée was therefore able to define prepositions as: "des mots qui désignent des rapports généraux avec abstraction de tout terme antécédent et conséquent."[13]

Let us now attempt to summarize this rather elusive concept of the word as a logical element. We have seen that the theory of a grammaire générale owed its existence to the fact that thought and the decomposition of thought were deemed to be the basis of all language. Thought was decomposed to give form to the logical proposition. This in turn was given utterance as a grammatical proposition whose elements and combination of elements were further dictated by reason. Dumarsais regarded thought as an action instantanée. Its decomposition depended on the instrumentality of words, and these same words, reflecting the logical relationships which they had found to exist in the thought, composed the logical proposition, and at the same time, as linguistic facts, were the symbols which formed the basic phonic material of which the grammatical proposition was constructed.

The grammatical facts of all languages could be more or less satisfactorily accounted for by this appeal to logic and reason. Having determined the means by which a language achieved its syntactical combination, it was a simple matter to prescribe

the grammatical rules which the language must apply, for such rules were dictated by logic. This of course was the reason why all attempts at grammatical analysis were normative. Where the facts of everyday speech appeared to contravene the dictates of reason, such facts were forced to submit. The grammarian simply posited the existence of an underlying construction nécessaire.

The influence of this type of analysis was felt for many years. If it reached the height of its development with Dumarsais, its influence far outlived his time. We have seen that Beauzée appeals to logic in his definitions of the parts of speech, and Condillac and all succeeding grammarians of the century at some point in their grammatical theory used logical formulas either as an instrument of, or as a support for, their particular type of analysis.

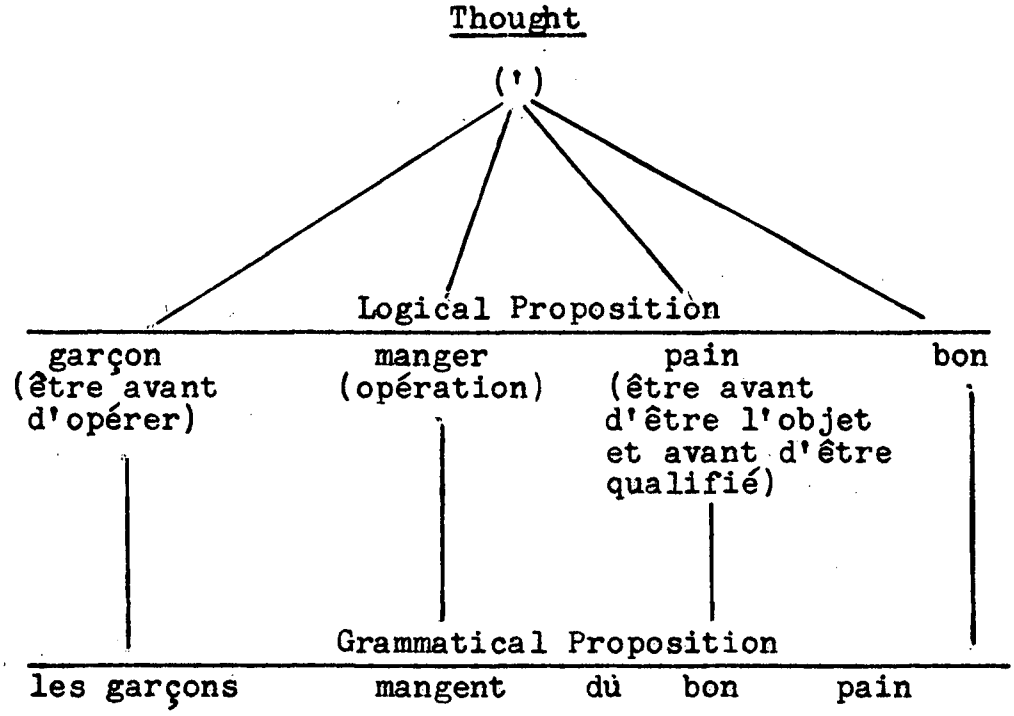
As we shall see in the succeeding chapters, Dumarsais differed from his successors, and especially from the sensationalists, in his belief that words played no part in the formulation of thought. For him the thought was; words were the instruments of its analysis and exteriorization. The following definitions best sum up his views on the word as an element of language:

> Le discours est un assemblage de propositions, d'énonciations et de périodes, qui toutes doivent se rapporter à un but principal.
> La proposition est un assemblage de mots, qui, par le concours des différens rapports qu'ils ont entr'eux, énoncent un jugement ou quelque considération particuliere de l'esprit, qui regarde un objet comme tel.

> Les mots, dont l'assemblage forme un sens, sont donc ou le signe d'un jugement, ou l'expression d'un simple regard de l'esprit qui considere un objet avec telle ou telle modification : ce qu'il faut bien distinguer. 14

The diagram on the following page will help to show the result of our findings to this point.

The word as an element of logic



Logical proposition

Words are the instruments for the decomposition and analysis of thought. Reason dictates that this is the natural order of the elements of the decomposed thought.

Grammatical proposition

Words are the signs of the analysed thought. Reason dictates the application of the syntactical rules of French and the restrictions on the main elements of the logical proposition.

1 Dumarsais, article "Construction", IV, 73

2 Ibid., p. 81

3 loc. cit.

4 Gabriel Girard, (1677 - 1748) author of Justesse de la langue française, (1718), Les vrais principes de la langue française, (1747), L'orthographe française sans équivoque et dans ses principes naturels, (1716)

5 The application of these logical criteria is discussed by Dumarsais in his article "Construction". They were by no means new, for they had been used to lay the so-called natural order of the sentence in the Grammaire raisonnée.

6 Dumarsais, op. cit. p. 74

7 These terms were used throughout the century in all the discussions about the classification of parts of speech.

8 Dumarsais, article "Article", I, 728

9 loc. cit.

10 Dumarsais, article "Abstraction", I, 44

11 Ibid., p. 47

12 Beauzée, article "Mot", X, 755

13 Ibid., p. 758

14 Dumarsais, article "Construction", IV, 81

Chapter 3

THE WORD AS A SIGN

The Encyclopédistes' most important contribution to the discussion of the concept of the word may be found in the articles by Beauzée. His conclusions in fact form a basis for the examination of all grammatical questions not already discussed by Dumarsais. For Beauzée, study of the word entailed three separate elements which he lists as: le matériel, l'étymologie and la valeur.[1] By le matériel he meant the phonic substance of the word. He refers the reader to such articles as "Son", "Accent", "Syllabe", "Lettre", etc. Etymology dealt not only with the origin and formation of words, but with roots, euphony, onomatopoeia, etc. as well. Despite the great variety of this last subject-matter and the many articles to which it gave rise in the Encyclopédie, there is little to claim our present attention. Although, as we shall see shortly, Beauzée had certain phonetic theories,[2] he at no time really approached a phonological theory. The third element, the question of value, will be discussed further on.

The very fact that Beauzée recognized these three distinct elements in dealing with the question of the word points, however, to an important departure from preceding theories. Unlike Dumarsais, he was not content to regard the word as an inert, monolithic entity, a mere tool to be used in the decomposition of thought. Apart from defining the word, in what we shall see as a significantly new way, Beauzée adds the following important

qualification: "Les mots sont comme les instrumens de la manifestation de nos pensées."[3] Words are to be considered as active elements of thought and of epistemological function. Here we can easily sense rationalist philosophy in the process of undergoing the influence of sensationalism.

Grammarians throughout the eighteenth century had no hesitation in stating that the word is a sign. The idea was in itself nothing new, for in the Grammaire raisonnée de Port-Royal words had already been defined as: "des sons distincts et articulés dont les hommes ont fait des signes pour signifier leurs pensées." We have noted that Dumarsais also looked upon the word as a sign, and what we have said of him was also true of his predecessors and of many of his contemporaries. Thoughts did not exist as part of words, and the words as signs merely reflect the decomposed thought and are not essential to the existence of the thought.

Beauzée defined the word in the following terms: ". . . un mot est une totalité de sons, devenue par usage, pour ceux qui l'entendent, le signe d'une idée totale."[4] It is this definition which will form the basis of most of our remaining discussion, and in this chapter we will examine his use of the term "signe" and see how it differs from that of Dumarsais. Before doing so however, we should note that there is one significant and immediately apparent element in the definition which characterizes the way in which his approach differs. It is, of course, the

absence of the word "pensée".

Although Beauzée could not deny the part played by thought, reason and logic in the formulation and use of language, these factors had a more minor rôle in his definition of the word. Interest in the word as a passive symbol of the mind's thought was replaced by an interest in the semiotic values which are inherent in the word as a sign functioning within a system of signs. For Beauzée words are not the symbols of meaning; they contain meaning, and this meaning (which we shall see later is both semantic and functional) is important not only for its overt reference to a specific thought, but also for the manner in which it achieves this reference. As an individual unit within a system, the word, even in a non-functioning state, now enters into specific and characteristic relationships with all the other signs which constitute the lexicon[5] of language.

At no point in the Encyclopédie did Beauzée define the sign, nor did he in any specific way state what the term meant to him. Nevertheless, it soon becomes apparent from his use of the term that he accepts the definition to be found in the article "Signe".[6] This article was edited by Diderot, but much of it was taken word for word from Condillac's Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines.[7] The following definition, taken from the article, is not Condillac's, but it accurately sums up his views. "Le signe," we are told, "est tout ce qui est destiné à représenter une chose. Le signe enferme deux

idées, l'une de la chose qui représente, l'autre de la chose représentée; et sa nature consiste à exciter la seconde par la prémiere."[8]

According to this definition therefore, the sign is a linguistic entity which is made up of two distinct elements, namely l'idée de la chose qui représente and l'idée de la chose représentée. The two-sidedness of the sign as envisaged by Condillac bears comparison with that posited by de Saussure in his use of the terms signifiant and signifié. Condillac's definition, moreover, is not so simple as it may first appear. In reference to one of the common fallacies about the composition of the sign, de Saussure wrote: "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image."[9] The Encyclopédie's definition does not make this mistake. For Condillac each element of the sign is an idée, and the idée is something which owes its existence not to thought but to sensation. It follows from this that the idée of the sensorily perceived chose qui représente (i.e. the sound-image produced by the phonic material) is comparable to the "psychological imprint" of de Saussure's signifiant. Furthermore, the idée de la chose représentée is also a sensorily perceived concept (produced in most instances by senses other than hearing) and is likewise comparable with de Saussure's signifié.

Unfortunately, as it stands, the last part of the definition introduces a certain ambiguity, caused by the use

of the word nature. The "nature" of the sign is not to excite its concept within itself by means of its sound-image. This would mean that the concept was itself a sign within a sign. The statement can only make sense in reference to the function of the sign as a means of communication. Its function is (by means of its totality of concept and sound-image) to give rise to a concept in the mind of a listener.

That Condillac understood the sign in its totality to be a psychological entity is borne out by his analysis of the three types of signs which he recognized. The first of these was pre-linguistic and formed part of his epistemological theory as well as of his theory of the origin and formation of language. This was the signe accidentel, made up of "les objets que quelques circonstances particulieres ont liés avec quelques-unes de nos idées, ensorte qu'ils sont propres à les réveiller."[10] That is to say, an object once perceived may, at a later time, be perceived again. The perceiver knows, through the agency of reminiscence, that he has already undergone the sensory experience which it causes, and he identifies that experience with the object. Thus, a man who has been attacked by a lion may experience the sensation of fear on seeing another lion. This then is a psychological imprint, not, as in de Saussure's definition, of the sound-image, but of any of the sensory experiences of perception. As such the sign remains pre-linguistic.

Condillac's second type consisted of the signes naturels. These are the interjections--"les cris que la nature a établis pour les sentiments de joie, de crainte, de douleur, etc."[11] Such cries are, in the first instance, evoked by a particular feeling. As such, they are not signs. It is only when the mind succeeds in linking the cry to the presence of the particular feeling that it becomes a sign. However, man is still unable to communicate by means of this sign. It is evoked by his own feelings or he understands it when it is used by someone seen to be experiencing those feelings. But it conveys no meaning unless the feeling exist. In the course of time the moment is reached when such a sign can be used to convey the idea of a feeling not present, and when this happens it becomes a signe d'institution.

The signe naturel was therefore regarded as a proper sign when it contained both a représentant and a représenté.[12] The moment that the eighteenth-century grammairiens-philosophes accepted the two-sidedness of the sign they were forced to consider the problem of the relationship of expression and content within this dichotomy. Like so many of their successors they asked themselves whether there was any connection, other than an arbitrary one, between sound and meaning.

As far as the signe naturel was concerned, Beauzée was willing to accept the opinion that the relationship between sound and meaning was not entirely arbitrary. For him the

interjection formed part of the langage du coeur (as opposed to the langage de l'esprit) and, as did most grammarians of the time, he believed that the interjection had a universality of meaning that could not exist in other types of words. In dealing with this topic he writes as follows: ". . . les sons que la nature nous dicte dans les grands et premiers mouvemens de notre ame, sont les mêmes pour toutes les langues; nos usages à cet égard ne sont pas arbitraires, parce qu'ils sont naturels."[13] The phonic material of the interjection is, therefore, in the first instance natural. When the interjection becomes institutionalized to the extent that it evokes the idea of a particular, its phonic material is endowed with referential meaning, and this phonic material can not be considered as an arbitrary representation of that to which it refers. Beauzée was therefore able to disagree with Buffier when the latter claimed that ouf! and ahi! ahi! are synonomous.[14]

The signe naturel is of interest because it raised this problem. As linguistic signs forming part of the system of language, however, interjections were regarded as of little importance. "Les interjections," Beauzée affirms, "ne sont point des instrumens arbitraires de l'art de parler, mais des signes naturels de sensibilité antérieurs à tout ce qui est arbitraire."[15]

The third and most important of Condillac's signs was the signe d'institution. These signs are those "que nous avons nous-mêmes choisis, et qui n'ont qu'un rapport arbitraire

avec nos idées."[16] That is to say, there is no natural bond between the phonic material chosen to compose the représentant and the semantic reference of the représenté. Although Beauzée had no hesitation in accepting the arbitrariness of the vast majority of the signes d'institution, he was faced, like the linguists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the problem of onomatopoeia. He could not believe that the choice of phonic material was always completely arbitrary.

He believed that onomatopoeia (like the interjection) is a universal phenomenon of language, and that in the imitation of the sounds of nature man sees a bond between sound and meaning, and that his choice of phonic material is therefore, on occasion, motivated by the meaning he wishes to convey. Thus, the material which goes into the formation of the représentant of the sign has, not only referential meaning, but what might be called an inherent "natural" meaning because of this bond with what it imitates.

Theories of onomatopoeia (and of the interjection) form an essential part of the eighteenth century's ideas on the origin and formation of languages.[17] If certain sounds of emotive or imitative quality have universal reference or meaning, such sounds are good evidence, in the eyes of the grammarian, to support the claim that there was but one original language (be it God-given or the product of human invention and development).

Together with many of his contemporaries and like most of

his successors, Beauzée realized that the question of onomatopoeia and the problems of the relation of expression and content are made more complex by the existence of two distinct forms of the phenomenon. Thus, such simple imitative forms as coucou, glouglou, bêler etc. were unquestionably accepted as having an obvious link between their phonic material and their denotational meaning. But he recognized a far more subtle form of onomatopoeia where this connection is less obvious.

Beauzée introduces his discussion of this sound symbolism as follows: "L'imitation qui sert de guide à l'onomatopée se fait encore remarquer d'une autre maniere dans la génération de plusieurs mots; c'est en proportionnant, pour ainsi dire, les élémens du mot à la nature de l'idée que l'on veut exprimer."[18] In this statement Beauzée was in fact saying that mentalist factors influence and limit the arbitrary choice of sound material. He substantiated his views by drawing widely from the works of de Brosses and Leibniz, and gave many examples of it, some of which we will now consider.

Vowels, Beauzée tells us, are formed without any obstruction in the buccal cavity;[19] they flow freely. It is this fact which gives rise to the Danish word aa meaning river! To him the combination st- seemed to appear in a large number of words whose reference embraced the idea of stability. Thus, Latin stare, stips, stagnum, stella, and French stable, état (estat), estime, juste. He explained this phenomenon by claiming that

the sibilant [s] is "arrêté subitement par la nouvelle articulation, ce qui peint en effet la fixité."[20]

Similarly, in a passage quoted by Beauzée, we find de Brosses asking why the combination sc- occurs so frequently in words applying to excavations and things hollow, as in the Latin scutum, sculpere, scutari and the French scarifier, scabreux, sculpture? Beauzée supplies an answer by stating that since the sound [k] occurs at the back of the throat, the articulation of the [s] is made to penetrate deeply into the mouth, thus conveying the idea of hollowness. As a final example of this mentalist attitude we may quote one short sentence: "N, la plus liquide de toutes les lettres, est la lettre caracteristique de ce qui agit sur le liquide: . . . navis, navigum, . . . nubes, nuage, etc."[21] The example is typical of eighteenth-century reasoning on this question, and Beauzée sums up:

> Toutes ces remarques, et mille autres que l'on pourrait faire et justifier par des exemples sans nombre, nous montrent bien que la nature agit primitivement sur le langage humain, indépendamment de tout ce que la reflexion, la convention ou le caprice y peuvent ensuite ajouter; et nous pouvons établir comme un principe, qu'il y a de certains mouvemens des organes appropiés à désigner une certaine classe de choses de même espece ou de même qualité. 22

The examples given above show that Beauzée and his contemporaries tended in their grammatical studies to equate sound and letter, a fact which frequently set them on the wrong course. Despite the naïveté of his approach in explaining the relation of sound and meaning and despite the fact that in his summary

Beauzée is positing a universal phonological element of language which is based on insufficient and inaccurate data, the arguments he uses are not without at least one redeeming feature. This is the merit that lies in his new approach to the word as a sign consisting of a dichotomy.

We have seen that both Dumarsais and Beauzée used the term "sign" as part of their definition of the word, but the difference in the interpretation of the meaning of the term characterizes the difference in their approach to language problems generally. Whereas for Dumarsais reason and thought were the foundations of grammatical description and the word the logical tool by which it could be achieved, for Beauzée language was more of a psychological phenomenon and the word a psychological unit of the phenomenon. Reason and logic play important rôles in his grammatical description as well, but they are the result of language rather than its means. His acceptance of the isolated word as a sign composed of two psychological elements had, as we shall see, far-reaching effects on his description of the function of words in language.

1
Beauzée, article "Mot", X, 752

2
Charles de Brosses, in his Traité de la formation des langues, (Paris, 1765) gave reasonably accurate articulatory descriptions of sound production.

H. J. Hunt, "Logic and linguistics," Modern Language Review, XXXIII (1938), 233, points out that Diderot came remarkably close to formulating a phonological theory very like the modern theory of economy but that the great encyclopédiste allowed himself to become involved in the not very precise matter of euphony. In the article "Encyclopedie", V, p. 639 Diderot wrote:

> L'enchaînement des sons d'une langue n'est pas aussi arbitraire qu'on se l'imagine; j'en dis autant de leurs combinaisons. S'il y en a qui ne pourraient se succéder sans une grande fatigue pour l'organe, ou ils ne se rencontrent point, ou ils ne durent pas. Ils sont chassés de la langue par l'euphonie, cette loi puissante qui agit continuellement et universellement sans égard pour l'étymologie et ses défenseurs, et qui tend sans intermission à amener des êtres qui ont les mêmes organes, le même idiome, les mêmes mouvemens prescrits, à-peu-près à la même prononciation.

3
"Mot", X, 753

4
Ibid., 762

5
The term lexicon is justifiable in this context because, as we shall see, Beauzée realized that all signs were not necessarily words.

6
Article "Signe", XV, 188 edited by Diderot

7
Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines in Oeuvres philosophiques, ed. Georges Le Roy (Paris, 1947), 19

8
"Signe", XV, 188

9
Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in general linguistics, eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Wade Baskin (New York, 1959), p. 60

10
"Signe", XV, 188

11
loc. cit.

12 From this point on I shall use *représentant* to mean *l'idée de la chose qui représente* and *représenté* to mean *l'idée de la chose représentée*.

13 Beauzée, article "Langue", IX, 253

14 "Mot", X, 753

15 "Langue", IX, 257

16 "Signe", XV, 188

17 P. Kuehner, *Theories on the origin and formation of language in eighteenth-century France* (Philadelphia, 1944)

18 Beauzée, article "Onomatopée", XI, 484

19 loc. cit.

20 "Onomatopée", XI, 485

21 loc. cit.

22 loc. cit.

Chapter 4

THE WORD AS AN ELEMENT OF MEANING

We have seen that Beauzée's definition of the word introduced a new concept of the sign, and that this concept was founded on sensationalist rather than rationalist philosophy. The isolated word exists as a sign which, for Beauzée, is necessarily composed of two parts. These two parts give rise to the dichotomy of expression and content and in doing so invite consideration of the relationship of form and meaning. We have further seen that, with the possible exceptions of interjections and onomatopoeia, Beauzée believed this relationship to be completely arbitrary. So much then for the isolated sign. But the sign does not exist in isolation. It is but one element of the whole system of signs which constitute language.

Beauzée realized that if meaning exists in the sign, part of this meaning depends on the relationships of that sign with all the other signs which make up the complete system. Furthermore, the meaning inherent in the sign exists on two quite distinct planes. Thus, the referential meaning of the individual sign obtains part of its meaning from its relationships with the referential meaning of all the other signs of the language. Meaning is not restricted to reference however. Each individual sign has functional meaning, and again part of this meaning on the functional plane depends on the functional relationships existing between the individual sign and all the other signs of language. Beauzée treated the question of meaning, or what

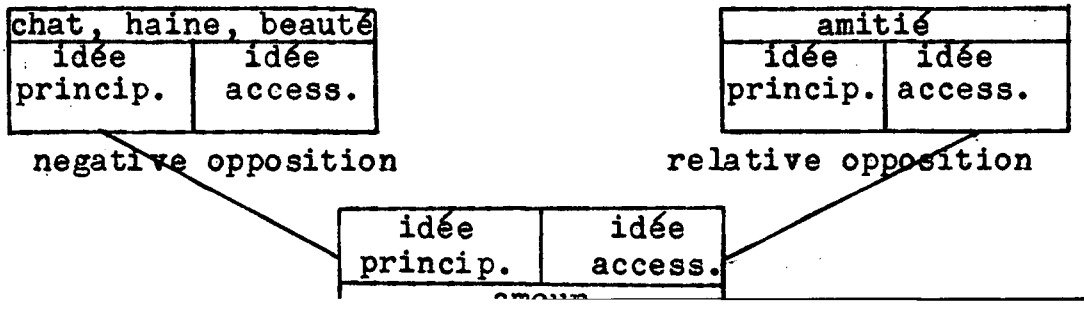
he called the signification totale,[1] from each of these two points of view. For him, therefore, the signification totale consists of the signification objective (i.e. referential meaning) and the signification formelle (i.e. functional meaning). This chapter will deal with the former.

The signification objective of the non-functioning sign depends on semantic criteria. The sign in the totality of its parts has referential meaning. But this referential meaning itself consists of two elements which Beauzée called the idée principale and the idée accessoire. Words differing in form are capable of having an idée principale in common. For example, Beauzée wrote that amour and amitié "présentent également à l'esprit l'idée de ce sentiment de l'ame qui porte les hommes à se réunir; c'est l'idée principale de la signification objective des deux mots."[2] However, since the words are obviously not synonymous, their differences must be accounted for. This is achieved by means of the idées accessoires. " . . . Mais le nom amour," Beauzée wrote, "ajoute à cette idée principale, l'idée accessoire de l'inclination d'un sexe pour l'autre; et le nom amitié y ajoute l'idée accessoire d'un juste fondement, sans distinction de sexe."[3] Irrespective of their formal likeness (i.e. they are both nouns) and irrespective of the similarity of the semantic content of their idées principales, the two words differ from each other because of their differing idées accessoires.

Remembering that Beauzée is here dealing with two non-functioning signs in the amorphous mass which constitutes the lexicon of the language, we see that he was proposing a system of relationships which bears comparison with de Saussure's idea of paradigmatic relations (at least as far as semantic content is concerned).[4] As with de Saussure, signs for Beauzée enter into oppositional relationships, and it is the differences which exist between signs that are important in the characterization of the individual sign. We may extend Beauzée's own example to substantiate this comparison. Thus, amour as a sign within the body of the lexicon is in negative relationship with signs like chat, haine, beauté. The negative relationship is expressed through the idée principale of each of the signs. On the other hand, amour has no negative relationship with amitié as far as their idées principales are concerned. As we have seen, their differences lie in their idées accessoires; these differences constitute not a negative opposition, but a relative opposition.

The following diagram summarizes the material we have presented so far, and will simplify explanation of the difficulties which faced Beauzée in his use of these criteria to define all types of words.

Signification objective (idée principale - idée accessoire)
Criteria: semantic and essentially denotational meaning



Having posited these relations between the non-functioning signs of the lexicon, Beauzée could then categorically state that, as far as the signification objective of two words is concerned, synonyms can not exist. Thus he wrote: "Quand on ne considere dans les mots de la même espece, qui désignent une même idée principale, que cette seule idée principale, ils sont synonymes; mais ils cessent de l'être quand on fait attention aux idées accessoires qui les différencient."[5] Conversely, homonyms will differ in their idées principales.

For such semantic relationships to maintain their validity as part of the concept of the word, they should exist, however, between any two elements of the lexicon. Beauzée was aware of this systemic fact. Furthermore, he recognized that this system of relations was in many instances difficult to justify. For example, although it could account for the relationship of amour and amitié, could it account for that of aime and aimons? Obviously it could not, for the semantic content of the idée principale and the idée accessoire of each word is identical with that of the other. Their difference of form is purely functional, but the differing forms imply differing meaning. In order to describe these differences it would have been necessary for Beauzée to posit a meaningful unit smaller than the word--that is to say, the morpheme. We shall see later that he in fact came very near to doing so, but as he did not use these ideas as part of his concept of the word we will not

introduce them at this time.

The following examples, all of which are Beauzée's own,[6] illustrate further difficulties which had to be reconciled with the system. The word savant exists as a single sign within the lexicon, and yet it functions as an adjective and a noun. Such differences of function are easily accounted for by applying functional criteria, but they must also be accounted for semantically. On the other hand, feu is a single sign with a single function in the phrases le feu brûle and le feu de l'imagination, but its meaning differs. As terms of a systemic opposition these differences must also be susceptible to semantic description. In order not to mix the criteria of his system by introducing function--and with it, syntagmatic realtions--Beauzée was forced to find other means of maintaining the paradigmatic relations within the body of the non-functioning lexicon. He did so by appealing to the value of the word.

The idea of value is merely an extension of the semantic oppositions which we have already seen. Thus, value for Beauzée meant systemic and relational value. His definition of the term betrays the influence of the rationalist grammar of Dumarsais. As Dumarsais' contemporary and successor, Beauzée could not escape the constant appeal to logic both as an instrument of analysis and as a tool for definition. Thus he defined value as follows: "La valeur des mots consiste dans la totalité des idées que l'usage a attachées à chaque mot. Les différentes

especes d'idées que les mots peuvent rassembler dans leur signification, donnent bien à la Lexicologie de distinguer dans la valeur des mots trois sens differens; le sens fondamental, le sens spécifique, et le sens accidentel."[7]

The sens fondamental refers to the basic manner in which the word is being interpreted. Thus, in le feu brûle, feu is understood in its original meaning, but not because of its context. In le feu de l'imagination, feu is understood in a sens figuré rather than in a sens propre, but again not for contextual reasons. As a single item of the lexicon the word feu can therefore have a sens fondamental which is either propre or figuré, and a semantic opposition is established between the word's denotational and connotational reference.

A word that can function as two different parts of speech depends on the sens spécifique to differentiate its meaning. For example, le savant and l'homme savant represent different meanings of the same word (as well as different functions). Each example represents a different point de vue de l'esprit, and these differences find their final expression in their different syntactical combinations. Their differences of meaning do not consist of a difference between denotation and connotation, but purely of differences in the attitude of the speaker. Such criteria remind one of Dumarsais' use of logic and the same point de vue de l'esprit.

The sens accidentel is perhaps best explained in Beauzée's

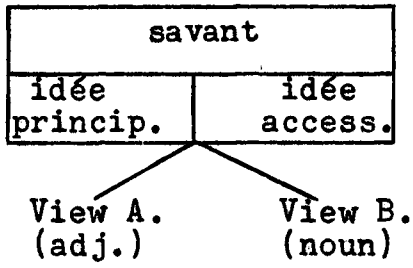
own words: "Le sens accidentel," he writes, "est celui qui résulte de la différence des relations des mots à l'ordre de l'énonciation. Ces diverses relations sont communément indiquées par des formes différentes, telles qu'il plaît aux usages arbitraires des langues de les fixer; de-là les genres, les cas, les nombres, les personnes, les tems, les modes."[8] We must be careful not to accept this as a statement of functional criteria dependent on form. Beauzée was still attempting to elicit semantic relationships, although at the same time he was laying the foundations for his later functional description. Thus, in the example given above, aime differs semantically from aimons because it reflects a different point de vue de l'esprit in reference to number.

The sens fondamental, sens spécifique and sens accidentel combine to form what Beauzée called the acception formelle--that is, the specific semantic content which the speaker attributes to the word. Such acception formelle establishes relationships which are dependent on the speaker's choice of various elements of semantic content, and therefore, at the same time, bridges the gap between semantic and functional meaning. It results in the following types of oppositions:

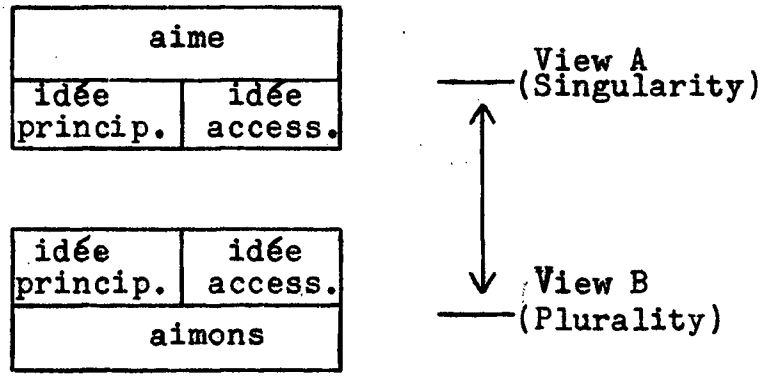
a) Sens fondamental (propre/figuré)
Denotation opposed to connotation:

feu		
denot-ation	⟷	connot-ation

b) Sens spécifique
Identical forms which differ in semantic content because one point of view is opposed to another point of view:



c) Sens accidentel
Differing forms which vary in semantic content because one point of view is opposed to another point of view:



By adding this concept of the value of the word (what we may justifiably call the semantic overtones) to the main semantic oppositions within the signification objective of the individual (and still non-functioning) items of the lexicon, Beauzée succeeded in setting up a system of paradigmatic relations based purely on the semantic content of the sign. As a means of grammatical description the system was to some extent superfluous. The grammatical facts could be more easily accounted for by appealing to function and syntactic context than to such

imprecise criteria as the points de vue de l'esprit. On the other hand, as a factor in defining the concept of the word, the system represents a great advance on Dumarsais' methods. Despite the fact that Beauzée uses the same semantic criteria as did Dumarsais, these criteria are applied as oppositional terms used to characterize the word as part of a linguistic system. The completeness of the system also assured Beauzée of more than one means of approaching grammatical description. That he, in fact, rarely employed the full panoply of oppositions at his disposal to attain this description in no way reduces the system's inherent worth.

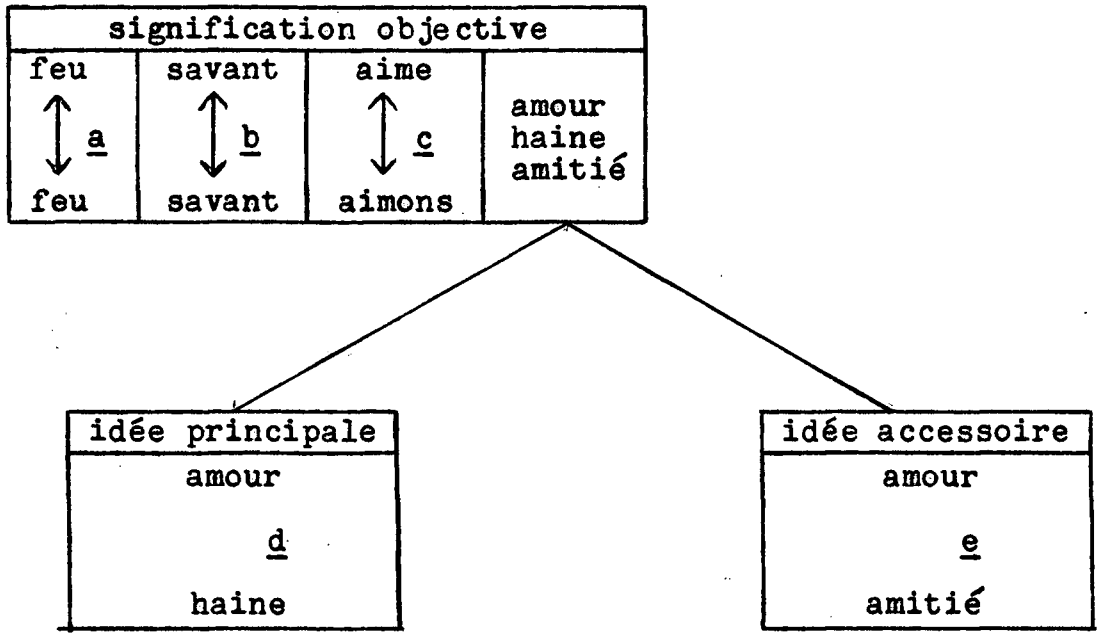
We have seen that Beauzée understood the signification totale of the sign to consist of two parts, namely the signification objective (which we have discussed in this chapter) and the signification formelle (which will be examined in the next). At this point in our study of Beauzée's concept of the word we may briefly summarize his views as follows:

The word is a sign; it consists of two elements--the représentant and the représenté--which establish the dichotomy of expression and content. The content of the sign has systemic value; each sign as an item of the lexicon must stand in certain relationships with all the other items of the lexicon. The signification objective states these relationships, using semantic content (idée principale, idée accessoire) plus a choice of semantic overtones (denotation, connotation, part of speech,

number, gender, mood, etc.,) as the terms of the relationships. Within the limits of this part of his overall system Beauzée examined the substance of the word's content rather than its form.

Always bearing in mind that the signification objective represents but one half of the signification totale of the word, we may, in the following diagram, schematize the system of oppositions which Beauzée succeeded in establishing on purely semantic criteria.

The system of oppositions existing between signs as individual semantic items of the lexicon



a denotation - connotation (sens propre/sens figuré)
b adjective - noun (sens spécifique)
c singular - plural (sens accidentel)

a, b and c represent the acception formelle

d negative oppositions of the idées principales
e relative oppositions of the idées accessoires

d and e represent the basic semantic oppositions

1 Beauzée, article "Sens", XV, 16

2 Beauzée, article "Mot", X, 761

3 loc. cit.

4 de Saussure, p. III

5 Beauzée, op. cit. p. 761

6 Beauzée, article "Sens", XV, pp. 16 - 17

7 Beauzée, article "Grammaire", VII, 843

The whole question of sens, acception and signification is complicated by Beauzée's use of different terms to refer to one idea. For example, it appears that he at times uses the terms sens principal, idee fondamentale and signification fondamentale to refer to the strictly limited idea embodied in the term idée principale. The part played in the concept of the word by the three types of sens is here based on the article "Mot", for it is only here that he makes use of the category of sens accidentel. Beauzée dealt in detail with the question of sens and acception in the article "Sens". However, the views expressed therein are Dumarsais' rather than Beauzée's for the greater part of the article is taken from Dumarsais' Traité des tropes. Of the four types of acception which are established in this article Beauzée makes use of but one. It is reasonable to suppose that he chose to ignore the other three because, first, they introduce extremes of logical criteria which are of more use in a stylistic analysis of language than in its grammatical description, and, secondly, because they make use of phonetic substance which plays but a minor rôle in Beauzée's concept of the word. The four types of acception to be found in the article "Sens" are: acception formelle (based on semantic content), acception materielle (based on phonetic and syllabic content), acception specifique and acception universelle (both based on logical criteria).

Beauzée restricted his use of sens to three types. In this article however, he lists no fewer than twenty-two. That he chose to ignore the greater part of these is justifiable on the grounds that they added nothing to a strictly grammatical description of language. Despite the imprecise names given by Dumarsais to the various types of sens, it can easily be seen that they range over a wide field of application and include semantic content, functional content, logical content, emotive power, stylistic use, etc. They are named as follows: sens propre, figuré, déterminé, indéterminé, actif, passif, absolu,

relatif, collectif, distributif, composé, divisé, littéral, spirituel, littéral rigoureux, littéral figuré, allégorique, moral, anagogique, adapté, louche, équivoque.

8 Ibid., p. 844

Chapter 5

THE WORD AS A FUNCTIONAL ELEMENT OF LANGUAGE

The oppositional relationships which are established by the semantic content of individual signs lead to the language corpus known to Beauzée as vocabulary. Vocabulary is "meaningful" to the extent that the semantic content of the individual sign represents a relative quantity which can be expressed only in terms of the whole system. The system is therefore made up of parts, and the parts have meaning only because they constitute a whole. As we have seen, however, meaning in language must go beyond the restrictions of the mere differences of semantic content. Words function, and it is by functioning that they fulfil their rôle as signs in a system of communication. The so-called paradigmatic relations which are bound to exist between the elements of a systemic corpus reflect only part of their role; the concept of the word is incomplete if that concept fails to include the limitations on the word's ability to enter into syntagmatic relations.

The statement of these limitations in the form of rules governing the syntactical combination of words represents the part played by traditional grammar right from the days of the grammarians of Alexandria. Beauzée was therefore stating nothing new when he wrote: "Un vocabulaire est véritablement la suite ou l'amas des mots dont se sert un peuple, pour signifier les choses et pour se communiquer ses pensées. Mais ne faut-il que des mots pour constituer une langue; et pour la savoir,

suffit-il d'en avoir appris le vocabulaire?"[1] His question evoked no novel answer. Semantic analysis could be only one of the tools of grammatical description. Formulation of the rules of combination must form the other. Any originality which such ideas may have contained is to be found rather in Beauzée's application of the ideas to the definition of the concept of the word. To describe the function of a word was merely to describe a fact of language. To make function a part of the concept of the word was to describe a linguistic truth.

Dumarsais had himself appealed to function in his study of the word. "C'est du service des mots dans la phrase qu'on doit tirer leur dénomination."[2] But his use of function is strictly to determine (that is, to restrict) the semantic content of a particular word appearing under particular circumstances. The following statement by Beauzée appears at first sight to have the same implication. "Les mots," he wrote, "sont comme les instrumens de la manifestation de nos pensées: des instrumens ne peuvent être bien connus que par leurs services; et les services ne se devinent pas, on les éprouve; on les voit, on les observe."[3] In fact, Beauzée appears to have been speaking in far more general terms. If, as we have observed, function could establish the "meaning" of the preposition de, it could also be used to form the basis of the concept of the word as an abstract linguistic phenomenon. And this is the idea which Beauzée was proposing when he spoke of the signification formelle

of the word.

Before considering the way in which Beauzée incorporated this signification formelle into his definition of the word, it is perhaps necessary to examine certain aspects of his actual practice of grammatical description. From what we have already seen of his theories we may fairly conclude that Beauzée represented a swing away from the rationalist approach to language questions, at least to some small degree. Despite his wide use of logic and reason, his theories appear to reflect the influence of Condillac, whose sensationalist doctrine so profoundly affected the grammatical writings of the later idéologues. Reason and logic, however, were the very foundations of the grammaire générale whose influence was felt in "linguistic" studies throughout the century, and, in the case of pedagogical grammar, for a much longer period.

We have seen therefore that Beauzée did not suddenly do away with semantic or logical criteria as a means of arriving at a useful normative description of language. For him, as for Dumarsais, language was the exteriorization of thought, and thought itself was dependent on certain exigencies of logic. Thoughts were made manifest in words, and words reflected the universal truths of the logical proposition. Beauzée, no less than Dumarsais, could appeal to an underlying logical structure to explain an elliptical form of expression, and in the preceding chapter we saw the great importance which he placed on semantic

criteria. The parts of the logical proposition have specific logical functions; this fact necessarily leads to the classification of the words that fulfil those logical functions. Hence, for Beauzée and all the other grammarians of the eighteenth century, classification into parts of speech formed a necessary part of grammatical description. The signification formelle is both the manifestation of these functioning parts of speech (that is to say, the morphological facts) and also the abstracted and generalized conditions which govern their ability to combine in syntagmatic arrangement (the syntactic facts). It is the abstraction of the terms of the syntagmatic relationships which form such an important part of Beauzée's definition of the word.

The idée totale is the crux of this definition. It consists, as we have seen, of two parts, namely the signification objective which we have already examined, and the signification formelle whose functional characteristics we must now consider. Like the signification objective, the signification formelle itself consists of two parts which Beauzée again called the idee principale and the idée accessoire. The idée principale is "le point de vue specifique qui caracterise l'espece du mot."[4] That is to say, it is the property or characteristic which designates the basic function of the individual word. Beauzée believed that the conventional signs of language (those in which the connection between the phonic material and the meaning is arbitrary) fall into two main functioning categories. The word

is either declinable or indeclinable.[5] Its function depends on the analysis of thought, and the form given to the function depends on the specific syntax of the particular language. Thus the broadest and most general classification of words into two main functioning groups depends on whether the word is declinable or not. For purposes of illustration, Beauzée, like so many of his contemporaries, made use of Latin examples.

All Latin nouns, he states, have the specific quality of declension; this is their formal characteristic, and as such it constitutes the idée principale of their signification formelle. Thus, amor and amare have a common signification objective (signalled by the common stem am-), but the formal property of noun declension belongs only to amor and this distinguishes its function from that of amare. In the same way as Beauzée sets up a system of oppositions on the paradigmatic plane so does he set up syntagmatic oppositions. "L'indéclinabilité," he wrote, "n'est qu'une propriété négative, et qui ne peut nous rien indiquer que par son contraire."[6]

That the oppositions which he here so clearly states were seen to exist syntagmatically rather than paradigmatically is borne out by two facts. First, in ad amorem, ad is indeclinable only in relation to the declinability of amorem. As functioning units, prepositions, adverbs and conjunctions therefore stand in negative opposition to nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs. These two groups form the first and major split in the

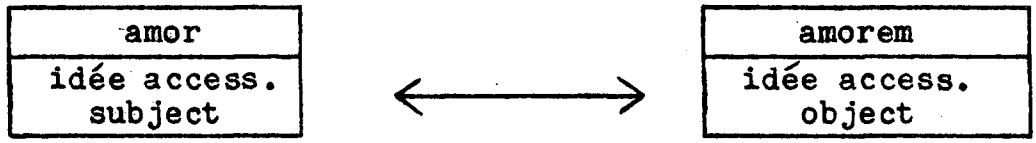
classification of function. Obviously, as far as the indeclinables is concerned it is difficult to keep semantic meaning and functional meaning apart, for as Beauzée said, their indeclinability is "une preuve de l'immutabilité de l'aspect sous lequel on y envisage l'idée objective de leur signification."[7] It is however the second fact, namely the idée accessoire of the signification formelle that fully bears out the claim that the relations are syntagmatic.

Both amor and amorem must exist as independent signs in the corpus of vocabulary, but there is no semantic opposition between them. Nor is there opposition between the idées principales of their signification formelle for they both have the declinability of the noun. However, the idée accessoire of the Latin noun is expressed in its ability to reflect "divers points de vue accidentels"[8] (and here we are re-entering the sphere of acception formelle). Thus, amor differs from amorem in its idee accessoire which specifies its function in the sentence. Stated in other terms, love (subject) can not basically differ in semantic content from love (object); it is their syntagmatic combination with the rest of the sentence which differentiates their functions and their semantic overtones.

The oppositions which are produced by these syntagmatic and functional criteria are parallel to the semantic oppositions. As we have already observed, ad stands in negative opposition to amorem. On the other hand, the opposition of amor to amorem

is relative rather than negative. The functional relations may therefore be stated as in the following diagram:

This opposition also exists semantically in the signification objective



This opposition does not exist semantically within the signification objective, but it does exist semantically in the sens accidentel of the acception formelle

The idée totale forms the core of Beauzée's definition of the word, and its parts maintain the dichotomy of expression and content already seen to exist in the Encyclopédie's definition of the sign as a two-sided entity. If, when dealing with the semantic relations of signs, Beauzée saw the relations within the content of the sign as existing in substance, he saw the expression of the functional relations as existing in form. The combination of all these possible relations added up to his concept of the word. (See diagram on following page)

Word (Signe conventionnel)[1]

[2]

Signification (idée totale)

Signification objective (content)	Acception formelle	Signification formelle (expression)
idée principale Semantic content i.e. amour		idée principale Classification into parts of speech on formal criteria: morphology
idée accessoire Semantic distinctions i.e. amour/amitié		idée accessoire Function within the sentence based on formal criteria: syntax
The above lead through negative and relative oppositions of a paradigmatic nature existing in substance to lexis		The above lead through negative and relative oppositions of a syntagmatic nature existing in form to the functioning word

1
The connection between "l'idée de ce qui représente" and "l'idée de ce qui est représenté" is arbitrary

2
Acception formelle bridges content and expression and represents the choices made from all the possible semantic and functional combinations within the individual sign

Between the formulation of a concept of the abstract word and the attempt to describe a specific, functioning word there may exist great differences. The existence of two distinct but complementary sets of criteria in the concept means that in the actual process of the analysis of a language, one set may be given preference over the other. This was certainly true of Beauzée's grammatical description. If his concept of the word failed to provide him with a polysystemic approach to the analysis of language (since he had no phonological theory) it did at least present him with a two-edged tool for constructing a description of the facts of language. His paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations were based upon the complementary elements of semantic and functional meaning, but in practice Beauzée chose to base his description on semantic and logical criteria rather than functional criteria.

That he should have done so proves no surprise. We have already seen that the rationalist approach to grammatical description was almost traditional. Logic and reason were inherent in the philosophy of the century. In addition to this fact, one must remember that it was the written word which formed the basis of linguistic study, and that the written word is more susceptible to analysis into logical propositions than are the more elliptical forms of the spoken word. Furthermore, the purpose of undertaking grammatical study was specifically to provide

a tool to teach the processes of correct, and therefore logical, thought. When functional criteria were applied, it was to the written forms of the language. That this was so is readily apparent in Beauzée's treatment of the problem of groups of written words fulfilling a single function.

An example of this tendency is seen in his discussion of compound conjunctions. Beauzée criticized those grammarians who dealt with such groups as though they were single words, and wrote: ". . . on ne doit pas regarder comme une conjonction, même en y ajoutant l'épithete de composée, une phrase qui renferme plusieurs mots."[9] In such expressions as à condition que and par conséquent, he claimed that it was the function of each word that must be considered, " . . . et chacun de ceux qui entrent dans l'une de ces phrases que l'on traite de conjonctions, doit être rapporté à sa classe."[10] In the same article he attacked Girard for having written such expressions as de plus and d'ailleurs as one word, " . . . ce qui est contraire a l'usage de notre orthographe, et conséquemment aux véritables idées des choses."[11] Beauzée therefore tended to restrict his application of formal criteria to the function of the written forms.

Further proof of this attitude is to be found in his article on the preposition. Most grammarians of the time looked upon à l'egard de and vis-à-vis de as compound prepositions. But, Beauzée objected: "C'est confondre les idées les plus

claires et les plus fondamentales, que de prendre des phrases pour des sortes de mots; et si l'on ne veut avancer que des principes qui se puissent justifier, on ne doit reconnaître que des prépositions simples."[12] His contemporaries made their decision on common orthographical practice and the general acceptance by other grammarians, but Beauzée was here willing to overide usage:

> C'est que l'usage n'a veritablement autorité que sur le langage national, et que c'est à la raison éclairée de diriger le langage didactique: dès que l'on remarque qu'un terme technique presente une idée fausse ou obscure, on peut et on doit l'abandonner et en substituer un autre plus convenable. D'ailleurs il n'est pas ici question de nommer tout simplement, mais de décider la nature d'un mot; ce qui est affaire non d'usage, mais de raisonnement. 13

We see that Beauzée's concept of the word was quite sophisticated in its grasp of the complexities of the subject. It is a concept, moreover, which seems to reflect a modern outlook. Beauzée recognizes that "meaning" must include function as well as semantic content, and that the two-sidedness of the sign leads to the possibility of our recognizing the presence of certain valences existing within a system of signs. The examples we have already cited, show, however, that when it came to a description of grammatical facts, Beauzée was not as rigorous in the application of his criteria as he had been in establishing them. He allowed himself to be too easily influenced by such external and irrevelant factors as orthography, and he chose to apply only some of his criteria to the exclusion of the rest.

The effect of this limitation of criteria is seen in his treatment of à l'égard de. Treating these as four distinct words (because of the way in which they are written), Beauzée may well have applied the following reasoning. As non-functioning elements of language each of these words stands, as a sign, in certain relations with all the other three. Thus, the prepositions à and de stand in relative opposition to all other prepositions and to each other. They are in negative opposition to all other elements of the lexicon (including l' and égard) both semantically and functionally. They are in fact semantically devoid of reference, but represent logical elements of the language because of their function of relating an antecedent and a consequent whose semantic content they determine. In similar fashion, the article l' reflects a certain point de vue de l'esprit (singularity) about égard and at the same time logically restricts its semantic content to something specific and individual. As a sign égard enters into negative opposition with all other words, as far as semantic content is concerned, and into negative relations with the function of all other parts of speech.

Beauzée's conclusions are therefore systemically correct when he claims that égard is the consequent of à and the antecedent of de for this is the logical exposition of all the above relationships--both semantic and functional. The syntagmatic facts are more easily explained by appealing to logical rather than to functional relationships. However, his insistence on

regarding à l'égard de as four signs led to a final inconsistency. He failed to recognize that the semantic and functional meaning of à l'égard de is greater than the sum of the semantic and functional meaning of its parts. Thus, à l'égard de is itself a complete, functioning sign which can enter into a relationship of relative opposition (both paradigmatic and syntagmatic) with, for example, the phrase à cet égard. If Beauzée had accepted the opinion of his contemporaries and had treated à l'égard de as a compound preposition, and if he had given function as great a rôle as logic, he would have arrived at a practical demonstration of the views that he defended in his concept of the word. In so doing, he would have achieved a descriptive grammar based on linguistic facts rather than a prescriptive grammar based on logical facts.

1 Beauzée, article "Langue", IX, 249

2 Dumarsais, article "Conjonction", III, 872

3 Beauzée, article "Mot", X, 753

4 Ibid., p. 761

5 Ibid., p. 753

6 loc. cit.

7 Ibid., p. 757

8 Ibid., p. 761

9 Ibid., p. 759

10 loc. cit.

11 loc. cit.

12 Beauzée, article "Preposition", XIII, 302

13 loc. cit.

One can not help but feel that it is Beauzée the educator who is speaking here rather than Beauzée the grammarian. His ten years as a teacher at the Ecole Royale Militaire must have influenced his approach to grammar. Here we see his interest in grammar as a tool for instructing in the art de bien penser. The dictates of usage are nevertheless as important to Beauzée as they were to his contemporaries. In his treatment of this particular problem he was not willing to accept the authority of the system of writing, but the following quotation shows his real approach to the question of usage:

> Tout est usage dans les langues; le matériel et la signification des mots, l'analogie et l'anamolie des terminaisons, la servitude ou la liberté des constructions, le purisme ou le barbarisme des ensembles. C'est une vérité sentie par tous ceux qui ont parlé de l'usage; mais une vérité mal presentée, quand on a dit que l'usage était le tyran des langues. L'idée de tyrannie emporte chez nous celle d'une usurpation injuste et d'un gouvernement déraisonnable; et cependant rien de plus juste que l'empire de l'usage sur quelque idiome que ce soit, puisque lui seul peut donner à la communication

> des pensées, qui est l'objet de la parole, l'universalité nécessaire; rien de plus raisonnable que d'obéir à ses décisions, puisque sans cela on ne serait pas entendu, ce qui est le plus contraire à la destination de la parole. (Article "Langue", IX, p. 249)

It is perhaps a pity that he did not follow the ideas which he here advocates. Had he done so, he would have based his language analysis purely on the spoken word.

Chapter 6

LES IDEES PARTIELLES

We have examined in the last three chapters the various elements of Beauzée's definition of the word. Of course, the definition in itself is of little value; not until we have examined his understanding of these elements is it possible to appreciate the full significance of his overall concept. The ideas and attitudes implicit in his definition are weighed and discussed by Beauzée himself in a large number of articles, and we have attempted to synthesize these ideas and attitudes. In the course of this examination we have found one article which deserves special attention. This is the article "Mot", in which Beauzée defends his total definition of the word and attacks the related definition of Port-Royal.

In the process of achieving these two purposes, Beauzée introduces three ideas which are perhaps only peripheral to our discussion of his concept of the word, but which, nevertheless, shed light on his attitude to language and demonstrate the depth of his understanding of linguistic problems. The first of these ideas expresses the relationship between language and epistemology, and we shall see that it is an idea which links Beauzée to the philosophy of his predecessors rather than to that of his successors. On the other hand, Beauzée's attitude to language as a means of communication was far more modern than that of his predecessors, and it is this attitude which constitutes the second idea. The third idea is one that suggests

that, although he was content to use the word itself as the smallest unit in the analysis of language, he was nevertheless aware of the heuristic value of positing a yet smaller unit, namely the morpheme. These three preoccupations will become apparent as we follow the course of Beauzée's defence of his definition.

The definitive form of his concept of the word states, as we have already seen, that "le mot est une totalité de sons, devenue par usage, pour ceux qui l'entendent, le signe d'une idée totale."[1] Beauzée maintains that the phonic material of the word is a totality of sounds rather than a combination of sounds for the simple reason that the totality may consist of a minimal form of one sound. Furthermore, the word son is itself a concept based on the abstraction of its dichotomous terms. These terms are the sons articulés (consonants) and the sons inarticulés (vowels). Although this dichotomy is of latent phonological interest, Beauzée dismisses it from his concept of the word, saying: "son simple, son articulé, son aigu, son grave, son bref, son alongé, tout y est admissible."[2]

In order for the sign to become an active element of language, it must be accepted into the system of language. It is only by the common assent of the individuals of the speech-community that the sign is allotted its specific meaning--both semantic and functional. Since there is, in most instances, no natural bond between the phonic material and the semantic content,

the word is a sociological fact as well as a systemic fact. In this way Beauzée justifies and substantiates his use of the phrase "devenu par usage" in his definition.

Like Dumarsais, Beauzée saw words as a means of analyzing thought. He stresses, however, that words are essentially a means of communicating thought. For Dumarsais the exteriorization of a logical proposition in the form of a grammatical proposition tended to be an end in itself. In other words, speech tended to be the end of language--and an end in no way dependent on the existence of the circuit 'speaker-hearer'. For Beauzée on the other hand, speech is communication; the purpose of the word is to communicate, and communication depends on a listener, and specifically on a listener who understands. Thus Beauzée can make the following distinction: " . . . ce qui se passe dans l'esprit d'un homme, n'a aucun besoin d'être représenté par des signes extérieurs" [and with this Dumarsais would have agreed], "qu'autant qu'on veut le communiquer au dehors."[3] Thus, as far as the epistemological value of the word is concerned Beauzée was in complete agreement with Dumarsais. (It might appear that Beauzée was positing the existence of <u>signes intérieurs</u> as opposed to <u>signes extérieurs</u>, but it does not seem that he had advanced so far in sensationalist philosophy that he would have claimed that signs of any sort were essential to thought.) However, the qualification "pour ceux qui l'entendent" in the definition, distinctly makes the word a means of

communication rather than a simple tool for the analysis and decomposition of thought.

We have already examined in detail what Beauzée meant by an idée totale and the term hardly needs further justification. In his defence of its use, however, Beauzée introduced another idea of some importance. As we have seen, the idée totale is a totality made up of a selection of various possible semantic and functional oppositions. It is the idea of this totality that is essential to the concept of the word as an independent unit of both vocabulary and communication. Now, despite this unshakeable contention, Beauzée could write: "on ne peut pas disconvenir que souvent une seule syllabe, ou même une simple articulation, ne soit le signe d'une idée, puisqu'il n'y a ni inflexion ni terminaison qui n'ait sa signification propre: mais les objets de cette signification ne sont que des idées partielles. . . ."[4] This statement comes very near to defining the modern concept of the morpheme. In doing so it states explicitly something that is implicit in all our discussion of the various semantic and functional oppositions: namely, that any idée principale or idée accessoire (be it semantic or functional) is, by itself, an idée partielle," . . . et le moindre changement qui arrive dans l'une ou dans l'autre est un changement réel pour la totalité."[5] Beauzée points out that were this not so, different forms of the same word could be identical in meaning.

This argument is given prominence in Beauzée's criticism of Port-Royal's definition of the word. The Grammaire raisonnée had stated that words were: "des sons distincts et articulés dont les hommes ont fait des signes pour signifier leurs pensées." Apart from criticizing the obvious tautology, Beauzée wrote:

> Mais il manque beaucoup à l'exactitude de cette définition. Chaque syllabe est un son distinct et souvent articulé, qui quelquefois signifie quelque chose de nos pensées: dans amaveramus, la syllabe am est la signe de l'attribut sous lequel existe le sujet; av indique que le tems est préterit; er marque que c'est un préterit défini; am final désigne qu'il est antérieur; us marque qu'il est de la premiere personne du pluriel; y a-t-il cinq mots dans amaveramus? 6

Again the concept of the morpheme is all but grasped, and the particular example he chose clearly indicates that Beauzée was aware of the problem of delimiting the precise residence of meaning. Thus, he recognized that the initial am- differs (because of its semantic content) from the final am (whose meaning is functional). In the same way that it is impossible to deny that a root-word has functional meaning as well as semantic meaning, so Beauzée here recognizes that the inflection may contain semantic meaning as well as functional meaning. To admit this possibility is to admit that a root or an inflection may (like the word itself) constitute an idée totale, i.e. a fully functioning sign with all the inherent possibilities of entering into oppositional relationships (again like the word). We see that Beauzée was thus also very close to establishing lexis as opposed to vocabulary. But he rejected the idea of

establishing this unit as an element of language simply because it existed as an idée partielle and its fragmentary meaning was the very antithesis of the idée totale of the word.

The discussion of these three questions, namely the epistemological importance of the word, the exact location of semantic content and functional meaning in the word, and, finally, language as a means of communication, produced perhaps only one conclusion of importance to Beauzée's theories. It supported the claim that was so basic to his understanding of the word, namely, that the limits to the word are established by the idée totale of the semantic content and the functional meaning. His failure to develop further the idea that language depends on a speech-circuit, an idea which might have led him to posit the importance of the context of situation, in no way invalidates the importance of the discussion as a specific indication of his insight into the problems of language.

1 Beauzée, article "Mot", X, 762

2 loc. cit.

3 loc. cit.

4 loc. cit.

5 loc. cit.

6 loc. cit.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

In our opening chapter we stated that the grammatical theories to be found in the Encyclopédie represented both the culmination of a grammatical trend which began in the preceding century and the beginning of a new trend which was to develop within the latter part of the eighteenth century. The conclusions which we draw from our examination of the two distinct concepts of the word that we find developed in the Encyclopédie support the contention that Dumarsais' work marked the zenith of the grammaire générale with its basis in logic, and that Beauzée's ideas indicated the birth of a new trend towards treating language as a psychological phenomenon. On the basis of these conclusions we will attempt to evaluate the respective contributions of these two men to the development of the science of linguistics.

In examining their respective concepts of the word we found it necessary to concentrate our attention, especially in the case of Dumarsais, on the form of grammatical analysis used. But here an important distinction must be made: the concept of the word does not obviously form a basis for or determine the type of grammatical analysis employed. Thus, although Beauzée's concept of the word is very different from that of Dumarsais, we can not infer that his analysis of the grammatical facts of language differs proportionately. (In fact, it does in at least one important aspect--as we shall see-but on the whole it is

comparable with that of Dumarsais.)

Our understanding of the two concepts has necessarily been arrived at by different means. Dumarsais (at least in his articles in the Encyclopédie) did not formally examine his concept of the word and the definition which he gave is only to be understood as part of his whole system of grammatical analysis and description. It was therefore necessary to synthesize his concept. Beauzée, on the other hand, not only defined the word, but analyzed, discussed and evaluated the parts of his definition in a large number of articles. To some extent these articles covered the details of his method of grammatical description but an analysis of this method would form the basis of an entirely separate study. We have therefore arrived at Beauzée's concept of the word through the analysis of his very complete definition and through a synthesis of the articles which present his own analysis of it. The conclusions which we are now able to draw are based entirely on the concepts of the word and not on the methods of grammatical description of our two grammarians. The distinction is important if our conclusions are not to be misunderstood.

Dumarsais' method of grammatical description depended on the facts of logic. Since language exteriorized thought first in the form of a logical proposition and then as a grammatical proposition, the word was a tool for the analysis of thought. It is because of this that his grammatical description depends

to such a large extent on the classification of words into the logical categories of genera and species. If Dumarsais looked upon language as a system, it was as a system subordinate to the most universal of systems--the system of logic.

Beauzée's method of grammatical description differed in one basic aspect. Whereas Dumarsais appealed to the logical classification of genera and species, Beauzée appealed to form (declinable-indeclinable). His interest therefore lay in linguistic facts rather than in logical facts. No longer was the word a mere tool, but an element of a phenomenon existing apart from, yet related to, thought.

Both Dumarsais and Beauzée looked upon the word as a sign. The term, however, is interpreted differently by each. For Dumarsais the sign is a mere symbol representing thought and therefore something to be used to lay bare that thought. To this extent it is the sign of a thing rather than of a concept. Its function is logical in that it is both the means of achieving the logical proposition and the symbol that takes on the grammatical forms established by the grammar of the language. For Beauzée, on the other hand, the sign is a two-sided entity whose existence as a functioning unit of language depends on the psychologically perceived totality of relationships which are inherent in it as part of a system. It is in the systemic value of its expression and content that his sign differs from that of Dumarsais.

These differences reflect the changing philosophy of the century. The sign as a logical element is a means to the rational expression of thought, and if it is used correctly (that is, according to the rationally based rules of grammatical combination), it will help the user to achieve the *art de bien penser*. For Beauzée the sign is founded in empiricism and sensationalism. Its value is empirical to the extent that the meaning which the individual sign contains results from the similarities and differences which exist between it and the system of signs as a whole.

Both grammarians agreed on the origins of thought--that is to say, they both recognized that it exists instantaneously in the mind without recourse to signs and results from the abstraction and generalization of the sense experiences. They differ, however, as to the relationship of language and thought. For Dumarsais the grammatical proposition is the end to which language aspires. That words act as a means of communication is, if not fortuitous, at least of little importance. In contrast, we have seen that Beauzée insisted that the sign is not complete until it has been understood by a listener.

Meaning is another concept which they interpreted differently. They both readily recognized the semantic content of the sign. For Dumarsais, semantic content is the *raison d'être* of the sign because it is easily submitted to logical analysis and classification. In the same way, function, for

him, meant logical function--a function which determines and restricts the semantic content of other words. For Beauzee meaning was more of a linguistic fact, and it was only in the combination of semantic content and grammatical function that the meaning of the sign could be apprehended.

Finally, it is their different philosophical attitude to the word as a sign that especially characterizes their different approach to language. Dumarsais, the rationalist, brought the theory of a logically-founded grammaire générale to its peak. Beauzée, showing certain influences of Condillac and of sensationalist theory, signalled the start of a trend which was to look upon language as a psychological--and perhaps even to a very small extent, as a social--fact.

Such a conclusion does not deny that there is little to chose from in the goals which Dumarsais and Beauzée (and indeed all the grammarians of the century) set themselves. Both were interested in language as a means to the art de bien penser. To a lesser degree, both were interested in producing a philosophy of language aimed at understanding the methods of acquiring knowledge and the methods of its use. But in the course of the century there appears to have been a change in the approach to language and a greater awareness of the complexities involved. The earlier, narrow approach, confined by the historical linking of language-study to philosophy, appears to have later broadened appreciably in order to admit the scientific truth that language

should be treated as a subject apart from the niceties of logic. Beauzée's concept of the word hints at this change of approach.

The influence of the grammaire générale extended well beyond the eighteenth century. Its effect, however, was especially evident in the many eighteenth-century pedagogical works in which it was considered that grammatical study based upon logical propositions was of inherent educational value to the child. Dumarsais' influence was therefore felt long after his death. Beauzée too, was highly esteemed during his own century, and his ideas perhaps had some small effect on nineteenth-century grammatical texts. But with the grammatical theories of the idéologues in the latter part of the century, Beauzée's speculations were completely overshadowed by the rising interest in comparative linguistics. The study of language was diverted into different channels which were to lead it, finally, to the principles of modern linguistics.

Sahlin, in her study of Dumarsais, states that after him, the grammaire générale was to degenerate "au point de n'être guère autre chose que de vagues spéculations métaphysiques sur les opérations de l'esprit, et son objet sera d'analyser la pensée par le moyen du langage, plutôt que d'analyser et d'expliquer les faits du langage."[1] This degeneration, she claims, started with Beauzée. The twentieth century has made use of the term "métaphysique" to cover what the modern linguist or the traditional grammarian would both call the eighteenth-century's many

sins in its study of language. We would prefer to say that, as far as Beauzée is concerned, his realization of the importance of the sign as a psychological rather than as a logical concept and as an element of systemic and relational value rather than as an inert element of logical analysis, puts him closer to twentieth-century thought than Dumarsais. With Kukenheim, we must conclude that, compared with his eminent predecessor and co-contributor to the Encyclopédie, Beauzée was "bien plus grammarien",[2] and we might add, "beaucoup plus linguiste."

Sahlin, op. cit., p. 4

Kukenheim, op. cit., p. 35

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