

Lajos Marosán *Meaning
and word classes**

There have been two opinions relating to the semantic properties of the parts of speech. The older, which dates back to the earliest linguistic investigations, claims that word classes as such have some meaning; (the term MEANING—it seems—should be taken in an intuitive pre-theoretical sense). This view has received some attention in the past two millenia and there have been sporadic attempts at articulating a theory of word classes in which the meaning of the parts of speech plays an important role. The other opinion, which is far more recent and less articulated, asserts that word classes only have structural or grammatical meaning and this is very much like grammatical categories, such as case, tense, aspect &c. This view contrasts LEXICAL to STRUCTURAL meaning.¹ A word form taken out of context, therefore, can be analysed as an entity complete with lexical and grammatical meaning. The examination of lexical meaning falls within the province of linguistic semantics while the explication of the latter, that is, grammatical meaning, remains undeveloped. In the following pages I wish to show that the claim for the meaning of word classes leads to contradictions and, therefore, one might adopt the more current view about the parts of speech.

* This article is the sixth chapter of a larger work which discusses the meaning of word classes. Earlier chapters review and analyse theories of word classes that contain explicit reference to the semantic properties of (some) parts of speech. For the purpose of this article some omissions and explanatory additions have been made. The following paragraphs are presented in the hope that the main point will be clear without the discussion that precede these pages.

¹ For instance, Fries (1952) introduces these terms without an explanation. In general, descriptivists (cf. Hockett, Gleason) deny that the parts of speech may have any semantic properties.

1 Introduction

Word classes have been alleged to possess semantic properties. As was indicated in the introductory chapter, the aim of this work is to explore this aspect of the literature on the parts of speech. Authors widely differ in their commitment as to word class meaning but even those who do not discuss this aspect cannot avoid referring to the semantic properties because explication of a particular problem is easier by reference to word class meaning. To illustrate the point I will quote from a recent article (Anward et al. (1997)) in which the authors survey and discuss the various strategies in establishing word classes with the purpose to comment on the ‘state of the art’ and to invite researchers to contribute articles on the problems of the parts of speech for the new typological journal *Linguistic Typology*. They constantly use the word ‘meaning’ during their discussion without formally defining or elaborating the concept; however, their ‘meaning’ is—at least, intuitively—clear.

“Two lexical items with the same type of meaning—say, both expressing a ‘thing’—...” (167)

“...it seemed that parts of speech in each language... were unique creations with their own meaning...” (168)

“Thus, when differentiation is (i) by morphological context, the lexemes take distinct inflections depending on whether they express nominal or verbal meaning... (e.g., those with nominal meaning occurring with articles but not with auxiliaries and those with verbal meaning occurring with auxiliaries but not with articles).” (173)

“...where the nominal and verbal meanings are coded in all the three ways.” (174)

“In other words, stem, inflection, and syntactic context all have to be just right for one or the other meaning to come through.” (174)

“Thus, there is ambiguity in all occurrences of the stems: anything can mean anything.” (174)

“...morphology is the sole characteristic that differentiates the expressions of the two meanings. The stems are ambiguous by themselves between nominal and verbal interpretation and syntactic context similarly does not distinguish nouns and verbs, either...” (175)

“—parts of speech may differ in the following ways (i) by their semantic-pragmatic definitional characteristics (e.g., whether a noun is a ‘thing’ or a ‘referential object’ &c.)...” (177)

“...the nominally/verbally-intended ones...” (176)

“Thus, anything cooccurring with an article is understood as a noun. . .”
(176)²

It will have been fairly obvious from the quotes that the authors associate the two word classes, nouns and verbs, with some type of meaning; though in this article only the problems of distinguishing nouns and verbs is discussed extensively, more precisely, Anward et al. illustrate the main points of the survey with nouns and verbs, one might think that the authors would subscribe to a view which maintains that all the parts of speech possess some characteristic meaning. What type of ‘thing’ word class meaning can be is not made explicit; in one of the quotes, however, there is a statement which associates the noun class to objecthood, which has been the practice during these two millennia. Perhaps the most important hypothesis is the ONTOLOGICAL HYPOTHESIS, which I am discussing in the next section.

2 The Ontological Hypothesis

The term is my invention, and it refers to the hypothesis that the various parts of speech are believed to reflect (some) ontological categories. For instance, it has been a widely held view that nouns denote ‘substances’, adjectives ‘qualities’, while verbs correspond to ‘activities’, prepositions to the category of ‘relation’. Grammarians usually subsume content classes under one or the other ontological category, minor word classes feature less often in discussions. This hypothesis dates back to the earliest Western investigations about language when the study of language became an intriguing phenomenon with respect to the logical structure of propositions, and the logical examination of language led to the establishment of word classes and their association with ontological categories. It is evident that this hypothesis recognized the word as a basic unit of sentences, or propositions—depending on the researchers’ commitment—, and by supposing a direct relationship between words and ontological categories logicians and grammarians hoped to find a solution to the problem of how language corresponds to the real world. Until about the first half of this century (as long as the Classical traditions were alive in education), grammarians used to refer their readers to the Aristotelian system of categories, tacitly assuming its correctness. In more current literature, however, linguists talk about ‘concepts, notions, contents, ideas’ &c. (cf., for instance, Schwarze’s (1991) discussion of the

² It must be admitted that the last two quotes can also be interpreted as referring to syntactic rather than semantic properties.

French ‘region concept’; see a summary below) to refer to the same categories, or more precisely, to the various aspects of the world that they take these categories to capture since the study of language has become independent of logical and philosophical speculations. The works of whichever group of linguists we read, the naive use of these terms (that is, either the Aristotelian categories or the contents expressed by ‘notion, concept, idea’) is apparent: ‘naive’ in the sense that they rely on a knowledge which they should supply or define themselves; in other words, these authors take it for granted that their readers know the scope and significance of terms, such as ‘substance, relation, quality &c.’ or ‘concept, content, idea, notion &c.’ Consequently, authors discussing word class meaning never explicate, or enumerate these categories: how many and exactly which of the original ten Aristotelian categories, or concepts, are relevant for the analysis of the words of a language. Hence the terminological confusion in the literature: authors use terms, such as ‘concept, category, notion, idea &c.,’ without even feeling the need to, at least, hint at the scope of any of these terms.

Practically nothing is known about the formulation and development of the ontological hypothesis, which has never been explicitly — either on logical or linguistic grounds — motivated. Schmidt’s (1964:10) line of argumentation, however, can be taken as a short but articulate expression of this contention. He suggests that both inflection and word class represent a higher degree of generality (*höherer Grad der Allgemeinheit*) than the conceptual content of the stem morpheme. Thus, when one compares, say, (syntactic) nouns with one another, one finds in them an element which is different and another element which is identical. They differ in content: they refer to different aspects of reality. For instance, *Bäcker* ‘baker’ denotes an individual or a group of people, *Tisch* ‘table’ singles out an object or a group of objects on the basis of certain common characteristics: description, function. In other words, stems differ in their Sachbedeutung (i.e., content meaning—see the discussion below), which is the result of human abstraction: common features of various objects and phenomena serve as basis for identifying people as bakers and objects as tables. A further step in the abstraction process results in the parts of speech. The different contents may appear in the same conceptual–categorical representation: objects with constant spatial dimensions, stable through time as nouns, while verbs express their contents as processes and happenings. In sum, Schmidt connects word classes to the ability of humans to abstract away from sense data: first, humans discover identical features in various sense data, which results in the first degree of abstraction, in the creation of contents which subsume

under one concept sense data which are not identical in every minute detail; secondly, these contents are said to have identical features, which serve as basis for a further degree of abstraction, and that is represented by the word classes of a language.

The controversial character of the ontological hypothesis has been known for a long time. Bursill-Hall (1971) reports that already in the fourteenth century Michel de Marbais wondered what 'substance' might be in words, such as *privatio*_N, *figmentum*_N, *negatio*_N. That is, Michel de Marbais's problem was that the three words are nouns morpho-syntactically, yet, they do not refer to 'substance' as is stipulated by the ontological hypothesis. Many similar examples can be given: *to resemble*_V and *height*_N express characteristics but they are not adjectives, *motion*_N refers to 'activity' without being a verb, *to equal*_V may be taken to represent 'relation' which is said to be the semantic feature of prepositions. As I pointed out in the section on Schwarze (1991), who hopes to resolve this situation by adopting a prototype approach suggesting that a particular concept may be prototypically represented in one word class while the occurrence of the same concept in other word classes is non-prototypical, there is no reason to believe in the correspondence between ontological categories (or: concepts) and word classes. To summarize Schwarze's position: he examines region concepts in French, more specifically, Schwarze sets out to examine how the notion 'region' is represented in various word classes, hoping that this concept will be best represented in the prototypical word classes. Schwarze expects, for example, that adjectives do not express region since this concept cannot be identified as 'quality' while prepositions and adverbs prototypically express this concept. Contrary to his expectations, this concept is equally well-represented in the noun, adjective, preposition, adverb and verb classes (for instance, *les environs*, *proche*, *dans de*, *dedans*) in morphologically simple forms. In other words, there is no motivation to assume that Schwarze's 'region concept' is more prototypical for one class than another and, consequently, the underlying hypothesis that word classes correspond to concepts is not borne out either—the hypothesis which serves as background for Schwarze to state that the region–adverb correspondence is prototypical but the region–adjective relation is not.

The resolution of this controversial state of affairs involves the following strategies:

- a. Grammarians are aware of the fact that the (ontological) category-word class correspondence is not one-to-one without proposing a solution that could save the theory. The ontological hypothesis features as part of a general theory in a description of word classes; in other words, this

stipulation never occurs as an independent criterion. Grammarians seek to resolve the contradiction of the hypothesis by suggesting that both formal and semantic features should be applied in the definitions of the parts of speech. Thus, if the stipulations of the ontological hypothesis conflict with the morpho-syntactic properties of words, then, the formal criteria win out. For instance, both *table* and *height* are nouns due to their morpho-syntactic properties but only *table* satisfies the stipulation that syntactic nouns represent ontological substances, (entities or objects). Therefore, only *table* will contain this type of characterization as an element of motivation for treating it as a member of the word class noun, *height* will be a member of the noun class only on formal grounds. (See, for instance, Jespersen 1924, Curme 1935, Schachter 1985.) This approach is pragmatic in the sense that grammarians strive after a grammar that works rather than after one that satisfies theoretical stipulations.

- b. Grammarians see the ontological hypothesis as part of a more general theory: prototype theory (Hopper & Thomson 1985, Givón 1984, Schwarze 1991). In this view the prototypical members of a class possess all the distinguishing features characteristic of that particular class while less, or non-prototypical items display the same features to a lesser extent. Again, a prototypical English noun shows number contrast, combines with a wide range of determiners, is able to take pre- and postmodifiers and—most importantly for this discussion—refers to a substance, entity or physical object—terminology depends on the commitment and educational background of the grammarian. If prototype-analysis forms part of the description of a particular language, it can give a principled answer to why, for instance, in English pronouns constitute a subclass of nouns; in general, it helps to keep up the belief in the regular nature of language while—at the same time—it caters for apparent regular exceptions. Subsuming the ontological hypothesis under prototype theory, however, is basically mistaken. While pronouns make up a subset of nouns with a handful of members, which also enables the grammarian to reasonably classify them as a nominal subclass, nouns representing ‘non-substance’ constitute as large a corpus as items referring to substances. In other words, exception is the rule. In this context, it could also be mentioned again that—as was pointed out in the chapter on prototype theory—there is no motivation in prototype theory, either, to associate prototypical nouns with visible physical objects and prototypical verbs to perceivable motions.

- c. The third strategy is negative: grammarians do not recognize that the insistence on the correctness of the ontological hypothesis yields impossible analyses. (See below.)

Also, the statements corresponding to the ontological hypothesis are exclusively based on introspection, which is subjective in so far as one examines one's own thoughts, feelings and intuitions. The experience is either shared by others in the sense that other grammarians (or logicians) investigating the same problems may or may not have very much the same intuitions about a word, grammatical category, meaning &c. Introspective statements are difficult — if at all possible — to substantiate but, on the other hand, for the same reason, it is also hard to criticise them.³ It seems unlikely, too, that statements of the ontological hypothesis can be verified or tested the way the semantic content of a linguistic structure is examined in current literature on semantic issues: meaning contrasts can be found by putting the items in compatibility, implicational, entailment &c. structures along the lines suggested by, for instance, Cruse (1986).

- a. This club is exclusively for married bachelors
- b. The lions are chirruping

Clauses (a) and (b) illustrate dissonance, hence the oddness.

- c. 'It's a cat' entails 'It's not a dog'
- d. John and his driving licence expired last Thursday
- e. He was murdered illegally
- f. The kitten drank a bottle of claret
- g. Guy struck the match/lucifer
- h. The match/contest was a draw

Structure (c) illustrates unilateral entailment, (d) zeugma, (e) pleonasm, (f) improbability and (g) and (h) can be applied to establish ambiguity and synonymy. What type of similar test structures could be devised—if not to prove, but at least—to motivate the feasibility of the statements of the ontological hypothesis?

³ Despite the critical remarks, the author of these pages will have recourse to introspection, admitting that, at the moment, there is no more adequate means to test items for word class meaning and, also, because the authors quoted and discussed make an extensive use of this method.

Moreover, in case there are differences in the intuitive judgement of a problem on the part of the researchers, one finds it impossible to argue for one or the other position. An illustration of this remark can be found in the philosophical literature.

Locke, in the section arguing for the importance of abstract or general ideas illustrates his point with the following example:

“For example, does it not require some pains and skill to form the general idea of a triangle? (which is yet none of the most abstract, comprehensive, and difficult;) for it must neither be oblique, neither equi-lateral, equicrural, nor scalenon, but all and none of these at once, In effect, it is something imperfect that cannot exist, an idea wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent ideas are put together” (Book iv, chapter vii, section 9)

Berkeley, criticising Locke’s conception of abstract ideas, argues that

“[i]f any man has the faculty of framing in his mind such an idea of a triangle as here described, it is in vain to pretend to dispute him out of it, nor would I go about it. All I desire is, that the reader would fully and certainly inform himself whether he has such an idea or no. And this, methinks, can be no hard task for any one to perform. What is more easy than for any one to look into his own thoughts, and there try whether he has, or can attain to have, an idea that shall correspond with the description that is here given of the general idea of a triangle, which is, neither oblique, nor rectangle, equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon, but all and none of these at once?” (1910: 102).

Not surprisingly, Arnauld & Lancelot (1660/1975) in their Port-Royal Grammar also associate syntactic word classes to ontological categories. They assume that the objects of human thought are either ‘substance’, such as the sun, water, wood, expressed by SUBSTANTIVE NOUNS while ADJECTIVAL NOUNS represent ‘accidents’, that is, entities which are dependent on substances, therefore, they have no independent existence the way substances do. The important difference between nouns and adjectives, for instance, between ‘redness’ and ‘red’ is that the latter only confusedly signify the subject^{4,5} of redness; it follows, then, that the adjective ‘red’ never exists by itself since the word which signifies this subject must be expressed in the discourse. In other words, an adjective must always be accompanied

⁴ Expressions, such as ‘clear(ly), confused(ly), obscure(ly)’ are never explicitly defined. The meanings should be extrapolated from the text.

⁵ SUBJECT is not a grammatical term referring to a sentence constituent; it denotes the entity that serves as referent, which—in our case—is characterized as red.

by a noun in a sentence. The relevant point for this discussion is that names of professions, such as 'king, philosopher, painter, soldier &c.' are, in fact, adjectives since they obscurely refer to a substance which is 'man', thus, a 'philosopher' should best be understood as 'philosopher man'. Thus, the (syntactic) adjective 'red' and the noun 'philosopher' should both be analysed as adjectives due to their capacity to obscurely refer to a substance. The reason why 'red' requires a supporting noun and 'philosopher' does not lies in that the latter can only have 'man' as subject (i.e., referent). To the best of my knowledge, no other grammarian has suggested a division of syntactic nouns along these lines. Again, the lesson is the same as in the previous illustration: what evidence other than introspection could be marshalled to prove either one or the other contention?

In an article reprinted in Langacker (1991 : 59–100) the author analyses nouns, verbs and adjectives from a cognitive perspective. His remarks seem relevant in this critical discussion of the merits of introspection. Langacker's position offers a reasonable compromise, which, however balanced it is, does not save the ontological hypothesis. He explains that

"[a] fair evaluation of the notions below must consider the coherence and descriptive value of the overall system in which they function. One cannot reasonably expect that the import and motivation of a particular point will be evident when it is examined in isolation, or require that independent psychological evidence must establish the cognitive reality of each individual construct (no linguistic theory satisfies such demand). (...) Thus when I claim that the adjective like designates a relation construed atemporally, while the verb resemble (or the phrase be like) scans this same relationship sequentially through conceived time, there is no way I can prove this directly or autonomously. What I can and will argue is that this analysis is part and parcel of a comprehensive descriptive framework in which a substantial array of semantic and grammatical phenomena receive a natural, unified, and revelatory account" (1991 : 60f).

What is the descriptive framework in which the ontological hypothesis can be accommodated naturally? What phenomena receive a revelatory account by it? It has no linguistic rationale: it does not contribute to analysis; at least, not to a type of analysis in which parts of speech have an important role. In actual fact, no grammarian ever used this feature in analysing any segment of any language. Could it be useful in a componential analysis of sentences? Could we, perhaps, explain why structures like the above in (a), (b), (d), (e) and (f) are anomalous? There is little hope.

In the following pages I will be examining views which—in one way or another—are related to the ontological hypothesis, and the reader can see that the belief in the correctness of this hypothesis leads grammarians to make contradictory and confusing statements.

3 *Beziehungsbedeutung* I

The subject matter of this section is much closer to linguistic analysis than the speculations of the previous paragraphs. There is a dichotomy concerning the semantic properties of words in the works of the following authors: Hermann (1928), Otto (1929, 1949), Sloty (1928, 1929), Sandmann (1940) and Coseriu (1987). This dichotomy involves the distinction between *Sach-* and *Beziehungsbedeutung*, that is ‘object-’ or ‘content-’, and ‘relational meaning’.⁶ These authors claim that the meaning of a word can be analyzed into these two components: the object meaning refers to, or presents, a content which can be related to the world—*die Gegebenheiten der Umwelt*, as Hermann puts it—which may involve activities, such as ‘loving, playing, resembling’; attributes (or: characteristics, qualities), as ‘blue, height, slowly’, entities, like ‘table’ &c.

Beziehungsbedeutung—relational meaning—, on the other hand, refers to the alleged semantic properties word class membership imposes on a certain content. The idea underlying the dichotomy is intuitively clear, and—as intuition—is acceptable. The rationale for the distinction is to explain the intuition that the ‘same’ meaning can be expressed, or: can occur, in the representatives of more than one word class. For instance, in this view it is asserted that the *Sachbedeutung* of these four words is identical: *Dank, dankbar, dank, danken* ‘thank, thankful, thanks (to), to thank’ (Otto 1949:17) and the reason that we think these are different words is due to their *Beziehungsbedeutung*, that is, the meaning added by the syntactic relations that a particular word form enters into. As Sandmann put it commenting on Ernst Otto’s dichotomy, the terminology captures the “inhaltliche Moment als ‘begriffliche’ Bedeutung, das formale Moment als ‘Beziehungsbedeutung’” (1940:84). What this sameness is, or what the common concept is, is very difficult or impossible to express since whenever one makes an attempt to explain the common semantic element of the words with identical content, one has to use either a noun or a verb, that

⁶ In Otto (1949) “*Sachbedeutung*” is synonymous with *Begriffsbedeutung* ‘concept meaning’.

is, one commits oneself to a specific interpretation of the content which is given in one of these words.

In the following paragraphs I will be discussing the problem of Sach- and Beziehungsbedeutung in detail. There are two important points which require explication:

1. The status of the content (Sache or Begriff) that a word can have, that is, whether these contents are related to ontological categories, such as 'substance, attribute, quality' &c., or they are smaller scale concepts, like 'semantic fields' if a sensible distinction between the two can be made at all. Put in plain English: what sort of 'thing' the content of a word can be.
2. The explication of what type of meaning Beziehungsbedeutung represents, more precisely, what its status is in relation to Sachbedeutung, how it can be described, what dimension of linguistic analysis it belongs to.

In this section I will be examining some of the passages in which Otto makes statements about *Beziehungsbedeutung*, hoping that our questions raised above under points (1) and (2) will be answered.

In one section Otto finds syntactic relations equatable to RELATIONAL MEANING (Beziehungsbedeutung): "Mit dem schlichten Wort 'regieren' bezeichnet man mithin die Art, in der bestimmte Satzbeziehungen, d. h. ihre Beziehungsbedeutungen sprachlich ausgeformt werden" (1949:18). The next paragraph asserts that

"[e]ntsprechend haben wir es beim Gebrauch der Wortarten nicht etwa mit Begriffsbedeutungen zu tun, sondern mit Beziehungsbedeutungen. Im Falle des Beispiels *der Laut* (als Substantiv), *laut* (als Adjektiv), *laut* (als Präposition) und *lauten* (als Verb) ist die Begriffsbedeutung innerhalb des Wortfeldes der gleiche; doch die Beziehungsbedeutung des Wortkernes ändert sich, da das Substantiv der Laut das Subjekt kennzeichnet, z. B. *Der Laut sch wird so und so gesprochen*. Dagegen charakterisiert das Verb *lauten* das Prädikat als solches, z. B. *der Satz lautet* folgendermassen. Entsprechend: *seine Stimme ist laut, laut Verordnung vom...* So erweist sich die Wortart als das bequemste Mittel, die verschiedenen Satzteile zu kennzeichnen, auf welcher Grundlage sich dann sekundär noch Flexionen entfalten können. Und wie so oft, ist auch hier das Selbstverständliche übersehen worden" (*op.cit.*:20).

I quoted the whole paragraph to show how artfully Otto avoids defining Beziehungsbedeutung. What he positively states is that the relational meaning of the word stem (*Wortkern*) changes because the word form *der Laut* occurs as subject; but what Beziehungsbedeutung consists in will remain a

mystery since he relegates the problem into another dimension: how exponents of word classes correspond to various syntactic functions.

Note that Otto's position — at least, the elements which are clear — can be likened to de Groot's radical approach to the semantic analysis of the parts of speech. In a lengthy article de Groot (1947) suggests that word classes are actually meaning classes related to morphological forms, that is, the language has as many word classes as there are inflectional paradigms. In other words, de Groot assumes that syntactic position can be related to the meaning of individual word forms. Morphological form and syntactic position seem — at least, in two of the languages used for illustration: Latin and Dutch — to be equatable. Otto's 'syntactic relations' would suggest a similar interpretation.

Now, it is one thing to assert that a linguistic element appears as subject and another to explain what its being a subject contributes to the meaning of the word. Otto suggests — what had long been known before him — that word classes can be differentiated as to their distribution in sentences but fails to identify the meaning component which is inherent in his dichotomy of *Sach-* vs. *Beziehungsbedeutung*. If he had managed to, he would have had the right to utter the last sentence of the paragraph.

Another point concerns Otto's WORD FIELD — *Wortfeld*. Above I said that there is nothing intuitively wrong with the assumption that words belonging to various (syntactic) word classes can express the same meaning (notion, idea, concept &c.). However, when it comes to the analysis and semantic comparison of actual words, this claim slowly evaporates. Consider Otto's examples above. In what sense do *laut_P* and *Laut_N* represent the same semantic field? What is the underlying concept? One might try saying 'something to do with *Laut* ('voice')': in this case, however, the concept is unavoidably linked to the noun-realization of the concept; in other words, one would identify the concept as some sort of phenomenon. Or: suggesting 'something connected to *laut_A* ('loud') things, appearances', one commits oneself to the adjectival meaning, that is, the concept is a characteristic (or attribute).

At this point, it behooves us to mention that theories of semantic field — which I find the closest notion to Otto's *Wortfeld* — examine compact and well-defined areas of the vocabulary of a particular language, such as perception verbs of English (Leech 1971), or semantically related nouns and verbs of German (Leisi 1961) though in Leisi's book a semantic field comprises, say, nouns that mean 'states, happenings &c.', that is, more comprehensive and higher level categories than Leech's perception verbs. In other words, semantic field theory — as is currently understood (see

e.g., Sweetser (1990))—is interested in the closely interwoven relationships within clearly delineated areas of meaning. It should, however, be borne in mind that the lexical items subsumed under a particular semantic field are taken — from the perspective of this discussion — as complex units: there is no distinction between ‘object-meaning’ (*Sachbedeutung*) and ‘word class meaning’ (*Beziehungsbedeutung*). Otto’s *Wortfeld* should be understood as the common objective content that underlies these words, that is, only one ingredient of meaning that enables them to appear as members of the same ‘word field’.

4 Sachbedeutung

In this section I will be attempting to elaborate on the notion of *Sachbedeutung* and seeking to systematically work out how one establishes the *Sachbedeutung* of a word, or more accurately, the *Sachbedeutung* of a derivationally related group of words. Since none of the authors who make use of the terms *Sachbedeutung* vs. *Beziehungsbedeutung* systematically analyse actual word forms with respect to their alleged common semantic content, I will be attempting to examine how this intuition can be substantiated, trying to reconstruct a system of comparing derivationally related word forms. Thus, in the following paragraphs, I will be considering some derivationally related words which are either (a) derived positively, that is, with the help of derivational affixation (from a stem or a root) in §§4.1 and 4.2; or (b) are the results of zero derivation, §4.3. In §4.4 I am discussing the possible common *Sachbedeutung* of derivationally (and possibly etymologically) unrelated words.⁷

4.1 Stem+derivational affix

For instance, *hart*_A/*Härte*_N ‘hard/hardness’. In such cases, that is, A→N, the *Sachbedeutung* will be the meaning of the adjective of the pair — at least, in Sandmann’s analysis: the noun obviously does not refer to an ‘object, substance’ or ‘entity’ so we are left with the other, the adjectival meaning: ‘attribute, quality’ or ‘characteristic’. Moreover, the fact that the noun is derived from the further unanalysable adjective stem helps us do so. But how can we explicate the common meaning of these two words? We

⁷ By STEM I mean a word form which can occur in a sentence without any further derivational adjustment; such a word can serve as the basis of derivation. For instance, *happy* is a stem from which *happiness* is derived. A ROOT can never occur as a word on its own.

may express this like: “Both words refer to the quality of hardness.” We can only assert that ‘quality’ is involved since other ideas, such as ‘entity, relation &c.’, would be more improbable. But ‘quality’ is an ontological category, which is believed to correspond to a particular word class, viz., adjectives, thus, one can never be sure that the reason why we see ‘quality’ in *hart/Härte* is because only the adjectival meaning is feasible. But adjectival meaning itself—as is explained by our grammarians—is a particular Sachbedeutung—a content—accompanied, or modified, by a Beziehungsbedeutung. Further, if we want to explicate Sachbedeutung, which is assumed to be the common semantic feature of words belonging to different parts of speech, we have to have recourse to (ontologically) high-level class expressions, such as ‘quality, substance &c.’, which are general enough to cover the hypothetical common semantic content ‘straddling’ across exponents of words of different class membership but which—as we shall see—cannot be equated with the Sachbedeutung we are looking for: these general concepts are reserved to account for class meanings. The authors seem to suggest that Sachbedeutung must be associated to the various aspects of the world. It looks, then, as if we were not able to pin down Sachbedeutung without reference to word class meaning—exactly the result that we want to avoid.

We might examine a more complex example: *der Laut*_N, *lauten*_V, *laut*_A, *laut*_P (Otto 1949:18). Again, what is the common Sachbedeutung of these words? Personally, I can accept that the noun and verb have a common meaning element: both could be taken to express some phenomenon. Would a lexicological description (that is, a traditional dictionary definition) explicating the meaning of these words suffice for the elaboration of the Sachbedeutung? Otto would not let us know. The adjective *laut* has some intuitive relationship to the verb and the noun, though one I am not able to explicate, but the presence of the preposition in this group is utterly counterintuitive for me; I am not in a position to question Otto’s ‘Sprachgefühl’—feeling for the language—but he does not explain in what way *laut*_P can be thought to have the same meaning element and I cannot find it. Since the establishing of a particular Sachbedeutung of related words relies on introspection, it is hardly verifiable. To return to *der Laut* and *lauten*: is it the activity which is expressed in the nominal form or the physical phenomenon in the verb? Or perhaps the quality *laut* finds expression once as a noun, once as a verb? It is difficult to decide. It is interesting to note that in cases where the noun is derived from the verb authors find it more plausible to assert that it is the noun which may have the meaning of the verb, as in *destroy*_V→*destruction*_N than the other way

round, that is, when the verb is derived from a noun. The reasons are obvious: if one assumes that the ontological hypothesis is correct, one finds it impossible for a verb to express a 'substance', that is, something a noun can express, while an 'activity' — expressed by verbs — can be conceived of as 'entified', 'reified', or 'presented as a substance' &c. Note, also, that this claim (i.e., the one concerning the common Sachbedeutung of a N→V derivational pair) contradicts the contention implicit in this approach that suggests that morphologically simple (content) word forms have primacy over their 'derivational relatives' as far as the establishment of the common Sachbedeutung is concerned. In other words, it is the underived form whose meaning should be considered primary.

Consider the following Hungarian derivationally related word pair (N→V): *ebéd*_N 'lunch', *ebédel*_V 'to have lunch'. Would we want to contend that their common meaning element is equal to that of the noun? In this pair the question is further complicated by the two possible readings of the noun:

- a. it refers to an event (cf. *ebéd közben* 'during lunch')
- b. it refers to a constellation of physical objects (cf. *Az ebéd rossz volt* 'The lunch was bad')

The verb refers to an activity. Thus, if the verb shares the meaning of the noun, which one is it? So, which is the Sachbedeutung: the event, the particular configuration of objects or is it rather the activity?

4.2 Root+derivational affix

Schmidt's (1964) German example is **fried-*: *Friede*_N, *friedlich*_A, *befrieden*_V 'peace, peaceful, become reconciled'; Hungarian **nyug-*: *nyugszik*_V, *nyugodt*_A, *nyugalom*_N 'be at rest, calm, rest'. In such cases how does one determine the root? We cannot rely on etymology since earlier stages are not perceivable in the synchronic forms, and, also, there is no principled way to tell at which stage of development we should stop. If the root is identified with one of the forms, we run the risk of equating Sachbedeutung with the meaning of this form; if the root is unable to appear as an independent word, it may also mean that it is meaningless; that is, though it is possible to explicate a hypothetical meaning, but again we cannot avoid the danger that this alleged meaning can be explained better in one word class. Schmidt suggests that **fried-* has a content which can be contrasted to that of 'war, unrest' (*Krieg, Unruhe*); in other words, Schmidt does not tell explicitly what the Sachbedeutung of **fried-* is but since both words put in meaning contrast to the root are nouns, one cannot avoid thinking of a nominal meaning, that is, we attribute the categorial content — Schmidt's

version for *Beziehungsbedeutung*—to it; exactly what the word class membership of *Krieg*, *Unruhe* contributes, that is, noun. It seems that in these cases *Sachbedeutung* can only be explicated the way lexicographers define the meanings of individual words. Put differently, while related words of the *hart/Härte* type allowed one to identify the *Sachbedeutung* as represented by one of the members of the ‘word family’, the *fried*-type rules out this option.

4.3 Same form—different syntactic functions

For instance, English *bottle*_{N/V}, *fancy*_{N/V/A}; German *blau*_A/*Blau*_N ‘blue_{A/N}’; Hungarian *fagy*_{N/V} ‘frost_{N/V}’, *zár*_{N/V} ‘lock_{N/V}’. Consider the *bottle*-pair first. If we analysed this pair from the point of view of word formation, and we wanted to establish which of the two possible syntactic occurrences serves as basis for the zero derivation, we could propose the following answer. Since ontologically the existence of the object denoted by the noun precedes the activity that involves bottles, the noun *bottle* should be considered primary from a derivational point of view. That is, *bottle*_N + \emptyset → *bottle*_V. If we extend this way of thinking to the problem under discussion, we arrive at the implausible result that the *Sachbedeutung* of **bottle* is an ‘object’, which can appear once as a noun, once as a verb, which latter option—as pointed out above—would be outrageously impossible in the texts consulted; since authors insist that a quality or characteristic can be expressed as a verb (*ähneln*), an adjective (*ähnlich*) or a noun (*Blau*); an activity as a verb or a noun (*destroy*, *destruction*); but an object can only find expression in the form of a (syntactic) noun. Again, the lesson seems to be the same: we cannot establish the *Sachbedeutung* of a word without reference to ontological categories, which are assumed to be a feature of word classes. While I find it intuitively plausible to hypothesize a common content for *bottle*_{N/V} and *blau*_A/*Blau*_N, I cannot imagine in what way *Sachbedeutung* can be shared by the triplet *fancy*_{N/V/A}.

Though strictly speaking the following observations do not pertain to the topic under discussion since it involves etymological speculations as well, it is interesting to remark that the establishment of *Sachbedeutung* is also problematic with cases in which the ontological primacy of the object over the related activity is questionable. Consider the following examples: English *dance*_{N/V}, *shit*_{N/V}; and their Hungarian translational equivalents: *tánc*_N/*táncol*_V, *szar*_N/*szarik*_V. One meaning of *dance*_N—which I consider as relevant in this context: the ‘act of dancing’ rather than ‘a piece of music’, ‘a social event’ or ‘a branch of performing arts’—denotes very much the same activity as the verb *dance*. So much so that it is more

important to explicate in what way the two meanings differ. To pursue the line of argumentation that was presented for **bottle*, one definitely cannot say that either the denotation carried by the noun or the one by the verb is ontologically prior to the other since the ‘act of dancing’, that is, the activity, creates the ‘dance’ itself, that is, the event. Thus, the activity is the event—a claim which sounds contradictory. Involving the gerundive nominal form, *dancing*, is of little help, though one may rightfully assert that *dance_V* and *dancing_N* have the same content—activity—; in this framework we cannot relate the three words: *dance_N*, *dance_V* and *dancing_N*.

4.4 Unrelated stems—related meanings

Tangentially, Schwarze addresses the problem of words which can be taken to have the same Sachbedeutung though they are morphologically unrelated. For instance, one might contend that *cat_N/feline_A* correspond to each other semantically in the same way as German *hart/Härte*. In English, and also in French, there are quite a few noun/adjective pairs like the above. Other illustrations involve English *sea_N/maritime_A*, *cattle_N/bovine_A* &c.; Hungarian *pénz_N/anyagi_A*; Italian *animale_N/bestiale_A*. Also, the following three English words may be related in a similar manner: *see_V/vision_N/visible_A*. Such words are outside the scope of the texts which manipulate the terms Sach-/Beziehungsbedeutung, possibly because they are grammatically, i.e., derivationally (and etymologically) unrelated.

In sum, we might say that the notion of Sachbedeutung, no matter how tempting it sounds intuitively, involves a circularity: it emerges from our texts that to establish the Sachbedeutung of a word, one cannot avoid referring to ontological (logical, conceptual) categories which are said to be the contribution of Beziehungsbedeutung, that is, word class meaning. Further, the assumption that there may exist a common content (Sachbedeutung) between words belonging to different word classes should be restricted to derivationally related words. Therefore, it seems that this distinction has some intuitive force if (a) etymologically and, at the same time, synchronically related words are involved and (b) only two words are in the scope of investigation (c) which are related through one derivational affix (cf. the discussion of Kuryłowicz (1936)). The problems that occur during the consistent application of the notion of Sachbedeutung can be ascribed to the fact that there is a discrepancy between morphological structure and semantic relations.

5 Beziehungsbedeutung II

Otto goes on saying that

“[e]s wäre aber verfehlt, die Beziehungsbedeutungen der ‘Formen’ als inhaltlich ‘formal’ aufzufassen in der Art quantitativer Bestimmungen der Mathematik oder der mathematischen Physik. Die Beziehungsbedeutungen haben vielmehr **eine materiale Erfüllung, nur nicht im Sinne der Begriffsbedeutungen**, aus denen die Flexionen allerdings entstanden können. . . — Wie sich die Begriffsbedeutungen als Namen der Gegenstände (im weitesten Sinne) auf die geschaute oder vorgestellte *Wirklichkeit* beziehen, so auch die Beziehungsbedeutungen, was bereits oben (S. 18) bei Erörterung der Wortart anklang und . . .” (Emboldening added, Otto’s italics; 1949:20)

and finishes the sentence with a reference to Paul’s *Prinzipien* without uncovering the secret of what the *materiale Erfüllung* (that is, Beziehungsbedeutung) of relational meaning really consists in. That is, Otto explicitly states that Begriffsbedeutung — the term he prefers to Sachbedeutung in 1949 — is a different dimension from Beziehungsbedeutung though both correspond somehow to ‘reality’ — *Wirklichkeit*. One might only surmise that the content of Beziehungsbedeutung in 1949 also involves the ontological categories Otto identifies word classes with in his 1928 article. In *Die Wortarten* he establishes seven word classes:

1. Dingwort (substantive)
2. Vorgangswort (verb)
3. Zuordnungswort (preposition and conjunction)
4. Eigenschaftswort (adjective)
5. Umstandswort (adverb)
- 6 and 7. words which could serve as modifiers of classes 4 and 5.

He contends that Beziehungsbedeutungen refer to the extralinguistic world. The meaning of each word, then, has two components: a concept meaning and a relational meaning and it is this latter that gives rise to the names of the parts of speech. What Otto seems to suggest is that words are related to the extralinguistic world in two ways. They denote some concept — *Sache*, *Begriff* — the status of which is not clear, on the one hand, and they represent ontological categories in the Aristotelian sense, on the other. Their amalgamation constitutes the meaning of a word.

In this section I will be continuing the discussion of the views on the meaning of word classes, but it seems necessary to involve other authors, who are espoused to the dichotomy outlined in the previous section: Slotty (1928, 1929), Hermann (1928), Coseriu (1987) and Sandmann (1940) all embrace the traditional ontological hypothesis, too.⁸

Slotty, too, assumes that the ontological hypothesis is correct. He uses the term WORD CLASS in two different senses: syntactically and semantically. He seems to use the terms SUBSTANTIVE, VERB &c. to identify morpho-syntactic classes identifiable formally, whereas terms, such as EIGENSCHAFTSWORT, DINGWORT &c. refer to semantic word classes. Unlike many authors who espouse the idea that word classes reflect ontological categories, Slotty is willing to discuss, and offer a solution to, the problem that there is no one-to-one correspondence between semantic and syntactic word classes; that is, a word expressing — let's say — 'activity' (Tätigkeit) may be realized both as a (morpho-syntactic) verb and a noun — *leben* and *das Leben*.

He has two things to say about this state of affairs. On the one hand, he suggests that (i) semantic classes 'straddle' across syntactic classes: the same semantic class, more precisely, the members of the same semantic class can appear as members of different syntactic classes. He illustrates the point with the familiar German adjective-noun pair: *hart*_A/*Härte*_N. Both words express 'quality', though they occur as realizations of two distinct syntactic classes: adjective and noun, respectively. In other words, Slotty seems to suggest that derivationally related words may be analysed as members of the same semantic class. However, he does not pursue the idea in this direction: this will be the starting point for Kuryłowicz (1936). It seems that this is his explicit answer to the question raised by the problem of the non-bi-uniqueness of semantic and syntactic word classes. In this respect, he explains that (ii) if a word expressing, for instance, some quality, appears as a noun, it is presented, or, better: depicted — *dargestellt* —, to us as a thing even though it keeps its semantic property of being an *Eigenschaftswort*. He illustrates his position with the noun phrase *das Gute* in the clause *das Gute bricht sich Bahn* ('Goodness makes way for itself'). Slotty's exact words are: "... die Gegebenheit *das Gute* nicht in die Kategorie Gegenstand (genauer: Wesen) überführt, sondern nur *bildhaft* als solcher dargestellt" (emphasis added, 1928:136). What does it mean that a quality is presented, depicted to us as an object? How should the word *bildhaft* be interpreted in this context? Is it possible for a 'Gegebenheit' to convert (*überführen*) to another

⁸ Various aspects of Slotty's and Hermann's works were discussed in earlier chapters.

category? If it is, when does that happen? There is neither an explicit nor implicit answer to these questions. Yet, there is one thing we may be sure about: Slotty identifies (syntactic) nouns with the ability to refer to objects, therefore, *das Gute* is an object. Since *das Gute* turns out to be an object, it is referred to as a *Dingwort*, that is, we may witness the curious situation when the same word belongs to two ontological categories at the same time. On the one hand, *das Gute* is an *Eigenschaftswort* in one dimension, on the other hand, it is also a *Dingwort* in another dimension.

I cannot answer the questions that can be raised with respect to Slotty's views on the correspondences between ontological categories and word classes; the most I can do is dismiss the hypothesis altogether: as I pointed out in the section on Schwarze, the reason why there is no one-to-one correspondence between semantic and syntactic parts of speech, more precisely, semantic contents and syntactic word classes, as is shown by Slotty, is that they have no correspondence whatsoever in the way that the ontological hypothesis assumes. A similar idea to Slotty's is presented by Hermann (1928:6), who speculates that human language has the capacity to express something which is not a thing, or not a characteristic or not an activity in real life, as a thing, characteristic or an activity, respectively.

In this way Hermann, too, creates a controversial situation. He assumes that in the clause *Der Sohn ähnelt seinem Vater sehr* 'The son resembles his father very much' the form *ähnelt* 'resembles' expresses a 'characteristic' — *Eigenheit* —, on the one hand, since 'to resemble' somebody is in Hermann's view a 'characteristic'. On the other hand, he insists that the same form should be taken to refer to an 'activity' since it is a finite verb, that is, the semantic content *Eigenheit* is expressed as an activity — *Tätigkeit*. To put it in another way, the form carries the meaning 'activity' syntactically, that is, by virtue of the fact that it is a finite verb, but, on the other hand, it also expresses 'characteristic'. How do we know that *ähneln*, *Schönheit*, on the one hand, express 'characteristic', and *liegen* — as he claims — 'state', on the other? We know it by examining the concepts these words refer to. Nevertheless, Hermann contends that *ähnelt* is a *Tätigkeitswort* because the content of the verb *ähnelt* — the Sachbedeutung — is realized as a finite verb even if the type of meaning that word class membership allegedly imposes on the word has nothing whatsoever to do with the concept which this word denotes. Hermann, too, identifies word class meanings — *Beziehungsbedeutungen* — in the spirit of the ontological hypothesis: nouns mean 'objects,' adjectives 'characteristics' &c. Possibly,

he wants to say that the syntactic relations⁹ these words enter into impose a type of meaning on these words, which amounts to ontological status, but he does not explicate how morpho-syntactic properties are related to ontological categories. For example, does putting some word into subject position ensure that its referent becomes ‘object’? The answer to such questions must have been obvious to the grammarians whose works are being critically analysed; otherwise, they would certainly have dwelt more on the problem.

The last author whose views I wish to discuss with respect to this dichotomy is Coseriu (1987), who sets up and discusses — to different extents — the following dichotomies:

1. lexical/categorial meaning¹⁰
2. category/class
3. concept/object
4. meaningful words/mere forms
5. concrete words/abstract words

Of these I will be discussing only the first; the others do not pertain to the topic of this work.

Coseriu asserts that one cannot say that *grün*_A ‘green’ belongs to the same class as *Grün*_N just because their lexical meaning is the same: these two words do not belong to the same class in any way, not even the same semantic class. Thus, unlike some authors, Coseriu claims that lexical meaning does not determine the class membership of a word, that is, there is no doubling of the notion of word class into semantic and syntactic word class. In this way, Coseriu avoids the confusion all the other authors get entangled in, who insist that by their *Sachbedeutung* words belong to certain

⁹ The reader should recall that *Beziehungsbedeutung* is the type of meaning that is acquired in syntactic positions, that is, a meaning corresponding to syntactic relations, *Beziehungs*.

¹⁰ In actual fact, he distinguishes four types of meaning:

1. Lexical (*lexikalische*)
 2. Categorial (*kategoriale*)
 3. Instrumental (*instrumentale*): the meanings conveyed by grammatical morphemes
 4. Grammatical (*grammatische*): agent, patient; determined, undetermined &c.
- Points 3 and 4 are only referred to in a footnote without an explicit discussion.

ontological categories and, consequently, to various semantic word classes; on the other hand, *Beziehungsbedeutungs* also represent ontological categories, thus — as we have seen above — a word belongs to two ontological categories at the same time, which is counterintuitive. Coseriu suggests that the lexical aspect contains the ‘what’ — *das Was* —, that is, what meaning is organized by a language — *das sprachlich Organisierte*, the categorial the ‘how’ — *das Wie (die Art dieser Organisation)* — of the word meaning. Therefore, lexical meaning can be subsumed under families, that is, semantic fields. The meanings corresponding to these fields can be enumerated, analysed and explained but not defined because these concern the experts knowledgeable in various fields of reality. With respect to lexical meanings the linguist can only register and systematically enumerate uses but cannot define the words; for instance, the definition of *Tugend* ‘virtue’ is the task of the moral philosopher and not that of the linguist. Linguistics, however, can make sensible statements about the uses of the word *Tugend*. Unlike lexical meaning, categorial meaning is a universally definable entity which does not belong to individual languages (*Einzelssprache*) but to language as such. While lexical meaning refers to entities, objects, that is, to various aspects of the world, categorial meanings do not refer to other things.

Though Coseriu does not tell us too much about categorial meaning, the message is intuitively clear: again, the meaning of a word is made up of two components. One — lexical meaning — refers to extralinguistic entities, the other is a kind of mould — *Gussform* —, in which these extralinguistic meanings can occur. Unfortunately, Coseriu does not explicate the essential features of this linguistic ‘mould’: what this type of meaning consists in; in other words, what it means that a word is a ‘substantive, verb, adjective’ or ‘adverb’.¹¹

In sum, we can state that Coseriu asserts that

- i. word categories are semantic categories of categorial and not lexical meaning;
- ii. word categories are the modes of meaning — *Bedeutungsweise* — of words in the actual speech activity;
- iii. the definition of the categories must be semantic, based on some features of meaningful words — *bedeutungstragende Wörter*.

¹¹ It seems that Coseriu considers these four word classes as ones with both lexical and categorial meaning. In a section he assumes that pronouns only possess categorial meaning because the lexical content is recoverable from context.

The explicit fulfillment of this last task is what authors never do. Nor does Coseriu; he does not mention what type of feature of meaningful words he has in mind.

Sandmann (1940), too, claims that words have two layers of meaning: 1. a content — *das Was* — which appears to us 2. formed either as verb or noun — *das Wie* —, that is, word class is a form of intuition — *Anschauung* — in which a particular content manifests itself. The content is only available for us through an *Anschauung* and it is this *Anschauung* that I am reviewing and examining in the following paragraphs.

Sandmann proposes that the difference between verbs and nouns lies in how a particular semantic content is viewed. For instance, the verb *reisen* ‘to travel’, which potentially ‘contains’ forms, such as *ich reise*, *er reiste*, *wir würden reisen* &c.,¹² can be likened to a river, neither the mouth nor the source of which we can perceive; with the expression *ich reise* we are put into the middle of a process. Nouns, on the other hand, offer a bird’s eye view — *Vogelperspektive* —: both the beginning and end of the activity denoted by the verb is perceivable; or, pursuing the river-metaphor: both the source and the mouth is in our view as on a map. Sandmann, then, claims that, in general, the difference in meaning between verbs and nouns can be found in the difference in the speaker’s attitude to a particular content: nouns present a semantic content in isolation whereas verbs present it in development.¹³ He explicates word class distinctions in terms of psychological analysis, which was not a unique approach in the first half of the century. In other words, Sandmann’s contention amounts to assuming that there is a verbal vs. nominal aspect. Unfortunately, Sandmann does not address the question of aspectual differences within the verbal category itself, that is, the verb *reisen* does have grammatical forms which refer to the activity seen in completion, that is, in his words, in an aspect where both the source and the mouth of the river is within our view. Therefore, the way the problem is raised does not make it possible for Sandmann to give it a balanced discussion. In my opinion, the aspectual distinctions within the verbal category, on the one hand, and the difference between nouns and verbs, on the other — as Sandmann suggests —, both involve a difference in the speaker’s attitude — *die Stellungnahme des sprechenden Subjekts*. Instead of explicating the problem in view of the verbal aspect, Sandmann

¹² Sandmann does not comment on the form *würden reisen* as to its status as a word.

¹³ “... Verschiedenheit der Stellungnahme des sprechenden Subjekts zu einem Inhalt —” (*op.cit.* : 100).

changes the direction of the discussion and finds it more important to emphasize that even verbs that (a) do not refer to activities, or (b) ones which take no obligatory arguments (for example, verbs taking expletive subjects), or (c) ones expressing ‘being’, will be conceived of as active manifestations. His illustrations are the French expressions *il fait beau, froid* &c., or *deux et deux font quatre* &c. He suggests that this is so because the meaning is related to an ‘I’¹⁴ which is the centre of experience — *Erlebniszentrum*. It does not really matter whether the grammatical person is identical with the speaker’s ‘I’, what does is the fact that the grammatical person enables the hearer to posit himself in a role so that he could ‘feel’ the different tense, modal shades, which get expressed in the sentence.^{15,16} The relation to an ‘I’, which Sandmann calls *Ich-Übertragung* — transference of the ‘I’ — is ‘responsible’ that

- i. most verbs are antropomorphic, as in German *ein Baum steht im Wald*, Spanish *el tren marcha* &c., and
- ii. we feel that most verbs are active since the ‘I’ is the centre of activity and life.

Again, as usual, the difficulty with psychological analysis is that it relies on introspection, therefore, it is not really open to criticism or even explication: one cannot question the validity of others’ feelings if one feels differently.

While the distinction between the semantic properties of verb and noun is based on the different attitudes of the ‘I’, the adjective and adverb require a different approach. Following Hjelmslev’s analysis in *La catégorie des cas*, who contends that in German predicative adjectives are case forms of adjectives, Sandmann considers adjectives and adverbs as one class; he only considers adverbs which are homomorphic (or homophonous) to adjectives. Thus, Sandmann discusses three word classes: nouns, verbs and adjective-adverbs, which — he claims — constitute a system in the sense that they

¹⁴ “... die Bedeutung in Beziehung setzen zu einem Ich ...” (*ibid.*).

¹⁵ “Die grammatischen Personen geben nur die Rolle an, indie das verstehende Ich des Hörers zu schlüpfen hat, um die verschiedenen zeitlichen, modalen etc. Färbungen, die der Sprecher im Einzelfall *ausdrückt, verstehen* d. h. nachempfinden zu können” (*ibid.*).

¹⁶ I would like to remind the reader of the 1928 Hermann article in which he suggests that ‘non-activity’ verbs should be analyzed as activity verbs by virtue of their finite inflection, that is, due to their capacity to refer to a subject, tense, mood &c. Hermann does not motivate his controversial decision. Sandmann’s presentation requires explanation, too; in a footnote, however, he refers the reader to Amman’s 1928 article not discussed here.

mutually define each other. He is convinced that noun and verb are the most characteristic word classes in the sense that the relationship between content and form is the easiest to understand in their case. The other word classes are only satellites—*Trabanten*—in relation to nouns and verbs and, therefore, deserve a treatment which is their due. That is, Sandmann does not even mention other word classes. Both types of word—adjectives and adverbs—presuppose the existence of noun and verb, respectively, therefore, these meanings are captured indirectly by the ‘I’. Unlike the noun and the verb, which can be characterized by spatial isolation—*räumliche Abgrenzung*, and actuality—*Aktualität*, respectively, and concreteness, adjectives and adverbs are abstract in so far as they do not belong to either space or time. Following Kant, Sandmann contends that the verb stands in the closest relation to time in so far as it (= time) is the inner form of intuition—*der innere Sinn der Anschauung*—and the substantive to space, which is the outer form of intuition—*äusserer Sinn der Anschauung*.¹⁷ Therefore, nouns are the words of isolation: distinct physical objects could serve as illustrations how the concept of isolation should be meant. Sandmann thinks that word forms which reflect the boundedness of spatial objects could best be used to describe ‘objects’, that is, spatially experienced phenomena, while phenomena in which the development of time can be felt are best presented by verbs.¹⁸ Sandmann insists that noun and verb are forms of intuition, *Anschauung*, but they do not mean space and time. Whatever meaning a noun has, its being a noun contributes the idea of boundedness and extension. On the other hand, a meaning is linked to expansion and dynamicness—*Erstreckung/Dynamik*—in a verb. Unlike nouns and verbs, adjectives can be characterized by their nature of ‘being related’—*Bezogensein*—to something else. Sandmann illustrates his proposal with colour adjectives. Though colour is presented in space but the colour adjective does not name the portion of space in which it is presented. On the other hand, we use a colour noun if we want to concretize and individuate; for example, *dieses Gelb*, *jenes Blau* ‘this yellow, that blue’. It is not clear what Sandmann wanted to illustrate with these examples. What does ‘individualize’ mean? Does he want to say that colour nouns suggest the idea of space? Further, he insists that the meaning of adjectives is abstract but the abstractness of adjectives also means a process. Deriving an

¹⁷ In this section I use Kant’s original German terms and the English translation of the German terminology that is adopted by Strawson (1992).

¹⁸ “... insofern sie in der Zeit sich entwickelnd vorgestellt werden...” (Sandmann 1940: 97).

adjective from a noun, we abstract away from the actual object denoted by the noun and present a characteristic related to that object, such as French *chaleur solaire* ‘solar heat’, in which the adjective — *solaire* — is derived from the noun *soleil*.¹⁹

To sum up what has been stated so far, it is fairly obvious that Sandmann’s position basically echoes the venerable tradition of the ontological hypothesis, which he explicitly states, even though he uses a more sophisticated route relying on Kant’s epistemological notions of space and time.²⁰ Word class differences are presented as subjective in the sense that it looks as if it were the speaker’s decision whether a meaning should be expressed as a noun or a verb.²¹ Therefore, it is not inconsistent with the theory to present these ‘aspectual’ differences as mostly stylistic.

In the rest of this section I will be discussing the last few paragraphs of Sandmann’s article in which he explains meaning differences between synonymous clauses. He analyses clauses even though in the earlier paragraphs of the article he was concerned with the semantic properties of individual word forms. He says that an aspect of a particular semantic content can be altered through derivation and so speakers have a choice between alternatives which they exploit according to their communicative needs. The possibility of these changes — *Umformungen* ‘refashioning’ — point to the aesthetic nature of language. In this way Sandmann directs the course of the discussion from a speculative and linguistic mode towards a different dimension in which he manipulates expressions, such as *Sprachgefühl* (‘feeling for language’), *primäre Formen* (‘primary forms’) and *Umformung* (‘refashioning’) and tries to establish the primary form from among the competing synonyms.

¹⁹ Sandmann’s intention is clear even though his illustration is infelicitous: it is *chaleur* which is characteristic of sun; the adjective does not describe a characteristic in the sense Sandmann claims it does; it could be described as a “classifying” adjective (see Chapter One). Also, his contention that *solaire* is derived from *soleil* is doubtful.

²⁰ “Dass die Wortarten (auf dem Umweg über das durch gewisse Sprachformen in vielen Fällen Gemeinte) mit den logischen Kategorien assoziiert sind, steht ausser Frage” (*op.cit.*:87). The parentheses are mine to emphasize the main point of the proposition.

²¹ In a fairly recent work, Croft (1991:51) discussing *motion*_N/*move*_V and *whiteness*_N/*white*_A suggests that “the forms *motion* and *whiteness* are used when the speaker wants to REFER to an action or property itself rather than to predicate it or modify an already-named object in some way.” Neither author explains in what way this choice is constrained by a particular language.

For instance, he compares the forms *er wünscht*, *er hat den Wunsch*, *er ist erfüllt von dem Wunsch*, *der Wunsch erfüllt ihn* 'he has the wish...'. He suggests that *er wünscht* is the primary form and the others are derived from this. He argues that in *der Wunsch erfüllt ihn* the psychological subject and the grammatical subject are not identical, so this must be a derived form: this is linguistic argumentation even if not in the vein of current theories.²² In the next set of examples, it is the nominal form that is the primary in the synonyms *er hat Fieber*, *er ist fiebrig*, *er fiebert* 'he has fever' for the *Sprachgefühl* while from the synonymous pair *er hat Tapferkeit*, *er ist tapfer* it is the second form which *Sprachgefühl* deems primary.

Sandmann does not explain whether there are historical considerations underlying his analyses: he cannot consistently do that since one might conjecture that *Sprachgefühl* is a synchronic phenomenon: the claim about the *Fieber*-clauses and *tapfer*-clauses is not acceptable since there is no real motivation for establishing one of these as primary form. So in Sandmann's discussion it is not clear why the reader should consider one of the forms more primary than the others: he seems to have forgotten about his claim that a word has two layers of meaning. In the search for the primary form he—like other grammarians insisting on the two components of meaning—could have looked for the form that represents the content which is present in all the others. It seems that the 'original' form is the one which the others are (grammatically) derived from. Also, it is impossible to find out in what sense the presentation of this section of this article relates to the more abstract part; certainly, it is about the relationship between forms which can be alleged to have the same semantic content but it seems that the only importance of word classes lies in the fact that language offers a wider choice of expression—a lesson too modest in comparison to the commitments of the earlier sections of the article. On the other hand, Sandmann's problems are obvious: how can one justify and apply a theory which claims that word class differences are differences in the speaker's attitude? This application of the theory is not inconsistent though the explanation of the examples does not require a theory so well-grounded in philosophical and grammatical speculations.

In the few paragraphs above I surveyed and analysed the notion of Sach- and Beziehungsbedeutung and views of word class meanings that are connected to these terms. In the following section I will be addressing the problems raised by another term which also corresponds to Sach- and Beziehungsbedeutung but requires separate treatment.

²² Current analysis would describe the differences in terms of theta-roles.

6 Benennungswörter

Hermann, besides distinguishing between Sach- and Beziehungsbedeutung, claims that Chinese words do not possess the latter, only the former; therefore, he prefers to call Chinese words ‘naming words’ — *Benennungswörter*. He argues for the impossible: in Chinese words are put next to each other with no grammatical relationship whatsoever expressed.²³ Then, it seems, that for him a grammatical relation can only be expressed through positive exponents of certain grammatical categories, but not by pure syntagmatic relationship; consequently, a word form which is not marked (morphologically) for its syntactic relation cannot be said to possess a relational meaning, Beziehungsbedeutung. Thus, it is not syntactic function which imposes a certain characteristic meaning on the individual word forms but function signalled by some markers; nor is it appearance in the sentence which he claims at the beginning of his article stating that “Wortart wird im Satz kenntlich.” Hence, Chinese words have no Beziehungsbedeutung; on the other hand, words armed with syntactic markers, that is, affixation, can be evaluated as to both their Sach-, and Beziehungsbedeutung out of context. Curiously, he seems to forget about the Beziehungsbedeutung of German words which turn up in various syntactic positions uninflected; for instance, nouns functioning as subjects or objects.

Schmidt (1964), too, establishes the same dichotomy of Sach- and Beziehungsbedeutung: following Hermann, he illustrates his point explaining that Chinese words differ from German words in that the former only possess ‘object meaning’ — *Sachbedeutung* — without a generalized concept meaning — *verallgemeinerter Begriffsgehalt* —, that is, word class meaning — which would serve as basis for their classification into word classes. Schmidt’s approach, however, has a new element: he asserts that Chinese words should be regarded in the same way as stems in German. For instance, (as pointed out above) though **fried-* has a content which can be contrasted to that of ‘war, unrest’ (*Krieg, Unruhe*), it lacks the conceptual-categorical content which word class membership contributes. The nominal suffix *-e(n)* places the word in the class of nouns and also forms its categorially indefinite meaning into the ‘shape of a thing’ — *Gestalt eines Dinges: der Friede(n)* ‘peace’. If the stem combines with the *-lich* adjectival suffix — *friedlich-*, the content will be transformed into a ‘characteristic’ — *Eigenschaftqualität*. Schmidt comments in a similar manner on the verb

²³ “Welche grammatische Beziehung obwaltet, ist nicht ausgedrückt, und zwar deswegen, weil keine da ist” (1928:21).

befrieden. In other words, the task of a word class is to mould the meaning of a content (represented as a syntactically ‘raw’ stem) into a categorial–conceptual scheme. Unfortunately, Schmidt does not pursue the parallel further between Chinese and German. Even if I cannot find acceptable Schmidt’s contention that word class membership imposes a “categorial–conceptual scheme” along these lines—he is also espoused to the ontological hypothesis—, he is undoubtedly right hypothesizing that word class membership does contribute to meaning.

The contention that the (content) words of languages of the Chinese type, that is, the flexible languages of current typological literature, should be treated as equivalents of roots of languages, such as German, which require syntactic formation to be able to appear in phrasal and syntactic structures may amount to a claim according to which various derivational and inflectional elements should be considered in the same way. Consider the following Hungarian examples

- a. A fiú sokat *fut·ott* tegnap
‘The boy ran a lot yesterday’
- b. A *fut·ás* egészséges
‘Running is healthy’
- c. A *fut·ás·t* az orvosok egészségesnek tartják
‘Doctors consider running as healthy’

The root **fut* must be modified with the past tense plus the zero third person singular suffix so that it could fit the context

A fiú (sokat) — tegnap

The same root needs suffixation in the context

A — egészséges

The *ás/és* ending is usually considered a derivational suffix in the sense that it creates a new lexical item from an already existing word or root, but from the perspective of an abstract root and a content represented by it there is no difference between derivation and inflection since both serve the same purpose: to enable the root, and, consequently, the particular content which it expresses, to appear in a certain syntactic context. In (c) both a derivational and an inflectional ending are present, making the root

fit the syntactic context. This approach, however, makes sense only if one asserts that the content meaning of **fut* remains constant in these syntactic positions — a claim that cannot always be substantiated as suggested by the following examples

- d. a *fut*·ó fiú
- e. A fiú *fut*·ó

In both (d) and (e) the italicized items represent the same phonological word. Following Schmidt's argumentation, one may suggest that in the context *a — fiú* the root **fut* assumes the form of a participle while it retains the same content (*Sachbedeutung*). On the other hand, *futó* in (e) must be considered a separate lexeme because it does not share the same semantic features as *futott_V*, *futást_N*, *futó_{Part}*. That is, the *futó* in (e) is best treated as an independent lexeme with a meaning of its own and, further, we cannot relate it consistently to the root **fut* — at least, not in the sense that we assume identity of meaning across these syntactically different words. Thus, the word forms *futott_V*, *futást_N*, *futó_{Part}* possess the same content — activity — while *futó* in (e) is a noun denoting a 'substance'.²⁴ That is, *futó_N* should really be treated as a new lexical item with a morphology, syntactic potential and meaning of its own. In other words, there are two conflicting claims

- i. there is a root which possesses some content; this root can occur in various syntactic positions with the necessary morphological adjustments so that it can fit the particular position in the sentence structure
- ii. derivation creates new lexical items: morphological formation of roots and stems result in new word forms carrying new meanings.²⁵

This problem has been addressed in the section on Kuryłowicz from a different aspect; however, the conclusion is the same: there is no principled way to distinguish between derivationally related words which possess the same meaning or content and which do not. That is, only syntactic context and not the morphological makeup of the phonological word *futó* will help

²⁴ I have been criticising the ontological hypothesis but at this and other points of the discussion I have no other choice than relying on its traditional terminology.

²⁵ The claim in (ii) is not an assertion in the works reviewed and analysed in this dissertation but a widely accepted assumption of word formation processes; see, for instance, Strang 1968: 101, Matthews 1974: 40ff, Lyons 1977: 522, Bauer 1983: 22ff &c.

us to decide whether the word is one form of the paradigm of the verb *ful* sharing the same content or an independent lexeme.

As already pointed out above (in chapter 2), Chinese is a language which is called FLEXIBLE in current typological literature (cf. Hengeveld 1992), which means that the same phonological item can appear in more than one function in sentences. Only in sentences can words be identified as nouns, adjectives, verbs &c. Consider the Chinese examples adopted from Mártonfi (1977:281):

- a. sǒu bù **yuǎn** qiān lǐ ér lái
old not distant thousand *li*-mile SUBORD-CONJ
'My honourable Lord, you did not consider a thousand *li*-mile distance too far away and have come!'
- b. **yuǎn** dào zéi
distant bandit thief
'Keep away from bandits and thieves!'
- c. **yuǎn** fāng zhī rén
distant country GEN man
'someone from a distant country'
- d. nán mán zhī **yuǎn**
South barbarians called *man* GEN distant
'the distance from the southern barbarians called man'

In (a) and (b) the highlighted word functions as verb, in (c) as adjective and, finally, in (d) as noun.

From the perspective of word class meaning there may be two opinions about the fact that the same phonological word has the potential to appear in various syntactic positions.

1. A word can turn up in any syntactic position (chiefly as the major word classes) which is not incompatible with its semantics.²⁶ At this point let me return to and quote from Hopper & Thompson's work.

"We should like to conclude, however, that linguistic forms are in principle to be considered as LACKING CATEGORIALITY completely unless nounhood or verbhood is forced on them by their discourse functions. To the extent that forms can be said to have an apriori existence outside of discourse, they are characterisable as ACATEGORIAL; i.e., their categorial classification is irrelevant. Categoriality—the realization of

²⁶ This is, for instance, Hengeveld's view.

a form as either a N or a V—is imposed on the form by discourse. Yet we have also seen that the noun/verb distinction is apparently universal: there seems to be no languages in which all stems are indifferently capable of receiving all morphology appropriate for both N's and V's. This suggests that the continua which in principle begin with acategoriality, and which end with fully implemented nounhood or fully implemented verbhood, are already partly traversed for most forms. In other words, most forms begin with a propensity or predisposition to become N's or V's; and often this momentum can be reversed by only special morphology. It nonetheless remains true that this predisposition is only a latent one, which will not be manifested unless there is a pressure from the discourse for this to occur. In other words, far from being 'given' aprioristically for us to build sentences out of, the categories of N and V actually manifest themselves only when the discourse requires it." (1984:747)

For the purposes of this article I would like to equate Hopper & Thompson's "acategoriality" with the claim that in flexible languages the same phonological word can appear in various syntactic functions. In other words, I take Hermann's, Schmidt's and Hengeveld's contention to mean that the words of Chinese (and of other flexible languages) are in fact acategorial and their word class *wird im Satz kenntlich*, consequently, their various meanings²⁷ are also manifested only in sentences. For Hopper & Thompson meaning is explicitly DISCOURSE-FUNCTIONAL, that is, the meaning of a linguistic structure is what discourse-function it performs in a particular utterance; nevertheless, Hopper & Thompson's position does not seem incompatible with the other scholars' (intuitive) notion of word class meaning that is related to syntactic word class membership. That is, there are two levels: inherent semantic properties²⁸ of lexical items (content), on the one hand, and syntactic category membership, on the other, along with its semantic consequences, that is, discourse function.

The problem with this view is very much the same as with the one that contends that the syntactic function and, consequently, the (syntactic) class membership of a lexical item is determined by its semantic properties. This view is very close to that of Kuryłowicz (1936), (and also to that of Brøndal

²⁷ By "various meanings"—in contrast with the assumptions of this article—I mean the usual lexicographic description, which explicates the meanings of words considered as unanalysable units: an abstract content along with the word class meaning.

²⁸ I wish to see "inherent semantic properties" and "Sachbedeutung" the same type of 'thing'.

(1928/1948), Dixon (1980)²⁹) who claims that the *primary* syntactic function (that is, the syntactic class membership) of a lexical item follows from its lexical value. Though this position, that the lexical properties of a word determine its syntactic function, that is, words assume syntactic functions which are compatible with their meanings, is intuitively feasible, it involves a circularity: it presupposes the knowledge of class membership and, consequently, the meaning that is associated with parts of speech membership. That is, a word, such as *table*, since it refers to a physical object, occurs as a (syntactic) noun because the category 'noun'—on the ontological hypothesis—corresponds to the ontological category 'entity, physical object'. But, again, *table* is syntactically a noun, thus, the idea, notion or concept of 'tablehood' seems to be connected to the word class 'noun' in European languages; in other words, it is linguistic knowledge that determines our concept of 'tablehood', not the other way round: it is not the nature of the concept that determines the class membership of the word. Thus, it is not at all surprising that one finds it natural that the inherent meaning of this word manifests itself as a syntactic noun. In other words, the linguistic fact that *table* is a syntactic noun contributes to our belief that the 'table-concept' or 'table-meaning' inherently corresponds to (syntactic) nounhood.

Consider the following examples from Tongan, an Oceanic language (Hengeveld 1992):

²⁹ Dixon (1980) suggests that syntactic properties of lexical items are basically defined by the semantic type of the lexical item. He also contends that these semantic categories are universal. For instance, he claims that adjectives represent the following semantic seven classes: dimension, physical property, colour, human propensity, age, value and speed. In his view, the problem of multi-wordclass-membership can be explained in a way that in languages each of the universal semantic categories has a norm realization; for example, the category 'colour' is — as a norm — expressed as an adjective; word classes are the syntactic realizations of the semantic universals. However, besides the primary syntactic realization, which each member of the particular type exhibits and which Dixon likes to call — following the intellectual atmosphere of the period — 'deep' realization, there are extensional properties applying only to a certain number of the type. He states that though English words, such as *laugh*, *rain*, *march* and many others, belong to more than one syntactic class, speakers of English have fairly strong intuitions that *march* and *laugh* are basically intransitive verbs, whereas *rain* is a noun, *narrow* an adjective. In other words, the norm realization of those semantic categories to which the words above belong are V, N and A, respectively, i.e., these are 'deep' verbs, nouns and adjectives. In addition, some members of the (semantic) type may also be associated by other word class(es). Thus, *laugh* is a deep verb; at the surface level it is both a verb and a noun.

- a. Na'e ako si'i 'ae tamasi'i
 PAST study small ABS child.DEF
 '*schooled little the child'
 'The child studied little'
- b. Na'e si'i 'ae akó
 PAST small ABS school.DEF
 '*littled the school'
 'The school was small'

The phonological word *ako* (underlined), occurs in both sentences. In the first it has the English equivalent of a verb ('studied'), in the second a noun ('school'); grammatical analysis of the clauses also points in the same direction: the first occurrence functions as predicate, the second as subject. Out of context, however, one cannot establish these meanings, therefore, it is not possible to predict the class membership and the syntactic function. If we know that *ako* describes a building ('school'), on the one hand, and an activity ('to study'), on the other, we obviously arrive at the conclusion that it will occur once as a noun, once as a verb. If we hypothesize an abstract meaning for **ako* something like 'something to do with learning', nothing can be predicted as far as class membership and word class meaning are concerned: we might think of 'school, to study, (the act of) studying' but we cannot predict that it does not mean, for instance, 'teacher' &c. The same argumentation — *mutatis mutandis* — can be repeated in the case of the Chinese example, **yuan*.

Let us examine the other highlighted word *si'i*. From an English or German point of view, the use of this word in both clauses looks natural and easily acceptable as one word with 'the same meaning' since in these languages adverbs and adjectives—as has already been pointed out in this work—can be expressed with the same phonological word. From a Hungarian viewpoint, however, the use of the same word in these functions is not at all justified: the first token would be translated as 'keveset' whereas the second as 'kicsi'. Both words have got something to do with 'littleness'. Further, one may claim that it is not the same meaning that is involved in the two occurrences of the word *si'i*: in the (a) clause it refers to 'quantity' while in (b) to 'quality'. The common denominator of the two can only be the English translation: the word 'little', which turns up in slightly different but not incompatible meanings.

The line of reasoning in the last paragraph is suspect if not completely wrong. I compared the Hungarian and the English translations of the Tongan lexeme *si'i*, which raises the question of how much translation influences analysis. Hengeveld (1992) compares languages on syntactic grounds avoiding reference to the idiosyncratic properties of the individual languages which may question the validity of the comparison. Thus, he applies a method which treats all languages in the same way: it is a simple stipulation which serves as background to investigation. Semantic analysis of the word classes, however, cannot avoid using one or another language as reference. Therefore, if one investigates word class meaning, one has to be aware that this notion may be connected to a particular group of languages and may be totally irrelevant in others. In other words, one must be aware of the perspective from which one examines this question.

The remarks of the last paragraph suggest that word class meaning should be best considered as a feature of syntactic position, as is proposed implicitly and explicitly by our grammarians. In this way one can avoid the dangers inherent in translating from one language to another.

2. The other possible view is that even in flexible languages lexical items are marked for class membership but this class membership only becomes transparent in some phrasal or clausal context. Consequently, the meanings should also be taken to be fixed as class meanings, which, again, become transparent in some context. In other words, Tongan and Hungarian is very much the same: words are marked for class membership and also for semantic potential. The only—and very important—difference is that in Hungarian word forms are (more or less) overtly marked for membership and, therefore, for syntactic occurrence and, consequently, their class meaning can be read off out of context while in Tongan both word class membership and meaning are features of syntactic or, at least, phrasal context.

It is fairly obvious that the claim that lexical items are acategorical and the contention presented in point 2 above—according to which words are marked for class membership in flexible languages but this can only be recognised in sentences—are contradictory statements. The latter assumes that lexical items have a clear category membership from both syntactic and semantic viewpoint. The advocates of acategoriality, on the other hand, cannot avoid assuming the existence of inherent semantic properties when they wish to explicate the occurrence of an acategorical lexical item as exponent of one or the other syntactic and, consequently, semantic category. In the sections on *Sach-* and *Beziehungsbedeutung* (3, 4 and 5) we have seen the problems of matching a syntactically unformed content, or more precisely,

a content abstracted away from (syntactic) word class, to a particular syntactic word class.

7 What is not word class meaning

In this section I will be summarizing the discussion so far and will try to articulate my intuitions about what word class meaning might be. I wish to proceed indirectly: I will be summarizing what has been asserted about word class meaning, pointing out in what way the particular approach does not correspond to my intuitions.

What is, then, this unknown Protean factor which cannot be grabbed on and moulded into a technical term; which scholars hoped to capture as either *Beziehungsbedeutung*, syntactic valence, a set of ontological categories, *allgemeiner Gattungsbegriff*, or simply as nominal, verbal, adjectival &c. meaning? It seems it is not a type of meaning at all as most of these terms would suggest: it is not a type of content which can be explicated the way lexicologists or semanticists discuss meanings; that is, it does not describe, denote, let alone, refer to some entity, characteristic of states of affairs of the world. Put in another way, what emerges as word class meaning is not a type of analysis which could feature in the semantic representation of a sentence. It is a different dimension.³⁰

1. As has been pointed out in various sections of this work, word class meaning cannot be identified as ontological categories since ontological categories attempt to enumerate and organize reality into a system which is based on the various properties of entities, events and phenomena. As I anticipated at the beginning of the section, word class meaning is not a semantic dimension.

2. In the section on Hermann (1928) the relationship of word classes and thematic roles was discussed. Contrary to Hermann's claims, it was found that word class membership is a different dimension from thematic roles even though the exponents of thematic roles, that is, clausal participants, are realised as members of various word classes. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that word class meaning could be equated with, or related, in any way, to thematic structure of clauses, especially, if my claim is correct that word class meaning has no relation to linguistic semantics. Since thematic

³⁰ For the sake of simplicity I keep on using the term wordclass meaning to avoid clumsy expressions, such as "non-semantic word class meaning" or "word class meaning in the sense proposed in this section" &c.

analysis investigates situations and how sentences relate to situations, word class meaning cannot have a role in thematic analysis.

3. Word class meanings cannot be seen as equal to the enumeration of semantic fields. This problem has also occurred and been summarily discussed. I wish to explicitly disclaim any relation between semantic fields and word class meaning. The items these word groups (that is, semantic fields) contain are thought to belong together due to their property of being related to a particular event, object, series of phenomena, experience &c., such as words of cooking, weather words &c. These lexical items are either collected on the basis of the commonality of word class and some particular meaning, for instance, time adverbs, verbs of movement, items of furniture &c.; or, a more comprehensive state of affairs is considered with respect to which the words of the particular semantic field cover the various aspects of that particular state of affairs. In this latter case, too, word class membership, and, consequently, word class meaning, is irrelevant since verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs can equally find place in the enumeration.

4. Givón (1979, 1984), too, proposes an ontological foundation for linguistic categories and suggests that the major FORM CLASSES (that is, parts of speech) reflect a scale of perceived temporal stability of the phenomena they denote. At one end of the scale of temporal stability are “experiences—or phenomenological clusters—which stay relatively stable over time, that is, those that over repeated scans appear to be roughly ‘the same’” (1979:51). At the other end are “experiential clusters denoting rapid changes in the state of the universe. These are prototypically events or actions” (*op.cit.*: 52). This scale manifests itself directly in grammatical categories: nouns encode the temporally most stable, verbs the least stable, phenomena while the denotata of adjectives are between these two extremes. I take Givón’s proposal to be equal to word class meaning, that is, in his view the meaning of the parts of speech can be best captured by the notion of time. Givón’s approach is not unusual in attempting to find word class meaning in the denotata of the words; more precisely, in the denotata from a particular aspect. Time stability is or is not characteristic of the entities, phenomena or experiential clusters that words of a language describe but only with respect to human perspective. That is, there is no difference in time stability between the characteristics ‘tall’ and ‘naughty’: there is nothing inherently more unstable in ‘naughty’ than in ‘tall’. The reason why Givón would like to see time stability as a gradient factor in adjectives is that the property that ‘tall’ refers to is less changeable in the entities to which it is ascribed than ‘naughty’ but the reasons for this lie in the way the world is and not in the way the word is, that is, Givón ascribes a characteristic to words which

the world has and not the words. Put in another way, the words ‘tall’ and ‘naughty’ denote some characteristic, and the examination of the section of the world to which these words are applicable informs us about the world and the use of these words rather than about the categorial characteristics of these words. Let us consider other words. The noun ‘book’ is unproblematic: it refers to an entity whose temporal stability is unquestionable. But how about stative verbs, such as ‘resemble’? In what sense would the denotation of the verb ‘resemble’ be less time stable than that of ‘book’? It describes a relation between two entities—a relation the temporal content of which depends very much on the entities featuring in the clause. Or take the grammatically and semantically related forms ‘jump’ and ‘jumping’. Both are nouns but the time stability of their denotata are questionable. The time content of ‘jump’ is practically uninterpretable while that of ‘jumping’ cannot be compared to that of ‘book’. Moreover, there is a difference along the lines of aspect—in the sense of the term as it is understood as a verbal category: ‘jump’ describes a point-like perfective action whereas ‘jumping’ presents the same (?) content as an unfolding imperfective action. Further, a sensitive issue in linguistic semantic analyses is abstract nouns and verbs. The usual practice is to analyse concrete nouns and extending the results to abstract nouns. As pointed out in several places, grammarians educated in the classical tradition contend that nouns eventually ‘mean’ substances (e.g., the Modistae, Arnould & Lancelot, Curme): SUBSTANCE is a general and loose enough term to cover both concrete and abstract nouns, such as *book* and *freedom*. In this way the problem is relegated into the realm of metaphysics. The answer to the question “What is substance?” is left to logicians and philosophers, and the inquiring reader had better find the solution on his own. Others claim that nouns refer to ‘objects’; it is obvious that *freedom*, *goodness* are not objects. So, grammarians either do not address this question at all (for example, Curme) or they explain that abstract nouns should be conceived as objects metaphorically, or figuratively (*bildhaft*) &c. (as, for instance, Sloty suggests). A more current solution is to say that nouns prototypically refer to objects, the other occurrences are not prototypical (for example, Lyons 1977, Schwarze 1991). As was pointed out, prototype theory stages a controversial state of affairs as a regular phenomenon rather than do away with the hypothesis. Langacker’s (and logicians’) REIFICATION (1991:98) is a fancy term to the same effect.

Again, if we pursue Givón’s line of argumentation we arrive at contradictory conclusions: theoretically, the content of a (syntactic) adjective can be so low in time stability that it should, in fact, be analysed as a (notional) noun. Or a noun can be so time-unstable that it is a verb, a verb, in turn,

can be so time-stable that it is a noun. This is very much the same claim, though in a different key, as the one that assumes that the same 'meaning' can be expressed by words belonging to different word classes, that is, the same Sachbedeutung can be referred to by words of different class membership. What I wish to say is that notional definitions of word classes applying the temporal/atemporal dichotomy lead to the contradictions discussed above in the sections on the dichotomy Sach-/Beziehungsbedeutung; word class meaning cannot be equated with the properties of the world which words describe, more precisely, generalized statements that cover the properties of certain aspects of the world.

Further, how can we apply Givón's notional definitions to actual language? What shall we do if we examine a word from the time-stability perspective and find it is time-stable? Will we immediately assign it to the noun group? Obviously not, if the word has verbal or adjectival trappings. So is it not begging the question to claim that notional definitions enable the grammarian to set up word classes?

An attempt to find the solution to the question as to what word class meaning is lies somewhere in the dimension proposed by Sandmann. The reader will remember that he suggests that the difference between nouns and verbs is that of Anschauung — intuition. That is, a certain content is presented in this or that particular way. Sandmann, too, manipulates the Kantian notions of time and space, therefore — grossly simplified — the actual referential or denotational content of words creeps into his analysis of verbs and nouns, respectively. If we strip his Anschauung of space and time, that is, of actual content referring 'out into' the world, we are left with word class meaning. That is, what is left is what has often been referred to as GRAMMATICAL or STRUCTURAL MEANING. Though I cannot name exactly what it means to be a verb, a noun, an adjective &c. from the point of view of word class meaning, and, further, cannot explicate the features relevant in this respect at this stage of research, I can explicate why it is difficult if not impossible to explicitly state what word class meaning is. Let me assume that word class meaning is a type of Anschauung — intuition. This Anschauung presents a content in a particular way that makes the word appear as a syntactic noun, verb, adjective &c. The moment one tries to explain how this Anschauung should be understood, one starts explicating the meaning: it presents the content as an activity, entity, characteristic &c., or it is something like a — &c. That is, the analysis shifts into another dimension — the dimension of reference or denotation. In other words, we try to formulate in what way the abstract content of the word is altered, and we arrive at linguistic semantics, that is, explicating how a particular word

cuts out a section of the universe. The expression I used above for a first approximation of what word class meaning is: “this Anschauung presents the content” is misleading as long as it suggests that word class meaning is about content, though it is not. As a step forward, the reader should think of meaningless words, such as Fries’ (1952: 71) *uggs*, *diggles*, *woggle*. Following Fries’ intentions, we claim that (a), (b) and (c)

- a. Woggles ugged diggles
- b. Uggs woggled diggles
- c. Diggles ugges woggles³¹

are grammatically correct English clauses in which the syntactic position and morphological makeup makes the first and third word of each clause a noun, and the second a verb.

Once these nonsense words follow each other in this order, a functional analysis would identify the first item as subject, the second as predicate and the third as object. What we are left with in these clauses — since there is no appreciable semantic, more accurately: lexical, content — is GRAMMATICAL MEANING. On the one hand, we can interpret the inflections: the (nominal) plural markers and (verbal) past tense, and third person present simple singular inflections, respectively; on the other, we can recognize word class meaning which seems to be dependent on syntactic position and inflection. Thus, in (a) *woggles* and *diggles* have NOMINAL MEANING, and *ugged* a VERBAL MEANING. That is, a way of presentation which I would like to call word class meaning. Further, by virtue of the lack of some determinative element before the nominally interpreted items and the presence of the plural inflection, one might venture to say that these clauses have generic reference though what is referred to generically is impossible to know. A clause, such as *Dinosaurs ate snakes*, could be likened to (a), which has generic reference.³² If word class meaning was a semantic meaning with some appreciable content as is suggested by the various authors, could we not expect to be able to conjure up some image or abstract idea of a content in some way? Or, would that be considered an absurd suggestion by a staunch supporter of the ontological hypothesis? Though the proposal

³¹ In his three illustrative clauses Fries uses variations of these words not just the three italicized items above.

³² On the basis of the analysis, we are in a position to put forward a Hungarian translation of (a): *Ruhatok nézsonokat csuszogtak*.

that *woggles* in (a) should be taken to be some ‘substance’ on the ontological hypothesis is difficult to reject, but the claim that it is an (ontological, that is, non-syntactic) ‘object’ is doubtful. Further, with the same effort of imagination one might claim that the verb form, *ugged*, represents substance, too. Also, can we be sure that the verb refers to an activity or a time-unstable characteristic? Or rather a relation, or perhaps it expresses a characteristic? If the traditional assumptions were feasible, we should be able to have intelligent guesses.

Consider the following Hungarian examples

- d. Farkas *szomorú*_A, mert már megint megbukott a fonetika vizsgán
- e. Farkas *szomorkodik*_V, _____ ” _____
‘Farkas is sad because he failed the phonetics exam again’
- f. Farkas *tanár*_N egy vidéki iskolában
- g. Farkas *tanárkodik*_V _____ ” _____
‘Farkas works as a teacher in a country school’

Both (d) and (e) describe the same state of affairs. In (d) an adjective functions as predicate while in (e) a verb. Intuitively, both forms have the same content (Sachbedeutung); the different shade in meaning is due to word class meaning. How could we explicate the difference between the two forms of predicate? We might explain that the adjective captures Farkas’s psychological disposition as a state, while the verb presents it as unfolding in time, as an event. But, again, this type of analysis, though it gives a more or less adequate account of the meanings, relies heavily on the actual semantic content of these words; we have already seen that the examination of contents leads to incompatible claims as to word class meaning. In other words, it seems impossible to explicate the word class meaning difference between *szomorú* and *szomorkodik* without referring to states of affairs in the world.

While some difference can be found between (d) and (e) along Givón’s time-stability parameter (claiming that the adjectival predicate is rather stative while the verb expresses a dynamic predicate), I cannot find a difference along these lines between (f) and (g). For me, the verbal predicate—*tanárkodik*—seems just as stative (or dynamic) as the nominal predicate.

From the discussion in the section above it seems as if the balance tilted for the *grammatical meaning*-hypothesis since all the statements and claims of the ontological hypothesis turned out to be reasonably refutable. Still, one can never be sure that what Fries calls grammatical meaning relying on

the analysis of the structures briefly presented above would equally satisfy an advocate of the ontological hypothesis, asserting that they talk about the same thing: the terminological difference can be ascribed to a different intellectual climate.

As was pointed out in the section on discussing the problems of the introspective method, intuitions cannot be argued for, or rejected, they can only be presented, so in this case the reader either shares my intuitions or not. The reader will also remember Langacker's statement about the value of introspection: though an introspective assertion cannot be proved (or disproved) directly or autonomously, an analysis relying on introspective statements can be part of a comprehensive framework of description. Implicitly, the ontological hypothesis suggested a pervasive relationship between morpho-syntactic form and the semantic structure of language — a relation which was never exploited for the benefit of the analysis. That is, though this hypothetical relation was always referred to in various texts and grammars, no actual analysis could profit from it, possibly because such a relationship does not exist or its advocates did not find the right evidence. The *grammatical meaning*-hypothesis has more modest expectations: though it is nowhere stated explicitly what type of meaning 'grammatical' or 'structural meaning' is, relating the various properties of the parts of speech to grammatical markers, thereby reducing the weight of the notion of meaning in word classes, results in more frugal but, at the same time, more easily manipulable terminology.

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