USE OF THESES

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COMMENCEMENT
CONTINUATION
CESSATION

A conceptual analysis
of a set of English and French verbs
from an axiological point of view

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A thesis submitted for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of the Australian National
University
"All parts of the present thesis, with the exception of quotes identified as such, consist of original work undertaken by the candidate"

Signed: Bert Leo Irma Peeters
The aims of the present work are manifold and various. It has been the author's intention to provide a contribution to the study of linguistic meaning by slightly adapting the methodology of conceptual analysis (i.e., Anna WIERZBICKA's approach to semantics), and looking at it from the point of view of axiology (i.e., André MARTINET's approach to semantics); furthermore, to investigate the meaning of a set of verbs according to the methodology just referred to; finally, to indicate how conceptual axiology can promote the study of lexical relations (and, possibly, the study of translational adequacy as well).

Part One, essentially, describes how conceptual axiology differs from conceptual analysis. One difference is that the former makes a distinction between "formulas" and "glosses": a formula reflects the meaning of a word in a particular syntactic frame (e.g., "X began to Y"), whereas a gloss expresses the meaning of a word in a particular sentence (e.g., "John began to run"). A gloss, therefore, is a "realized formula". Formulas and glosses constitute a hypothesis of what speakers want to convey to their addressees. Another difference between conceptual axiology and conceptual analysis resides in the role that linguistic economy plays within the former. It is argued, among other things, that no two words can permanently have the same value (inherent economy of the language).

Part Two is the "backbone" of the investigation. It applies the methodology of conceptual axiology to verbs denoting a commencement, a continuation, or a cessation in English and in French. It is shown that there are some remarkable differences in the way in which both languages encode these concepts by means of verbs. Sixteen verbs were selected for this empirical study, of which eight are English and eight French.

Part Three provides a summary and an outlook. In the latter part, it is claimed that the empirical study of sixteen verbs undertaken in Part Two can, and as a matter of fact should, be enlarged to include all words denoting a commencement, a continuation or a cessation. The result would be a study of what the author, in earlier publications, has called an axiological field. A few remarks on the possibility of checking translational adequacy conclude the dissertation. It is hoped that a more comprehensive study of this kind could eventually lead to the publication of new translations, which are better than the existing ones.
Words do not come easy when one has to acknowledge how much one’s work owes to others. In the first place, I wish to thank Anna Wierzbicka for being a better supervisor than I had ever dared to imagine. In a firm and yet friendly way, she did a marvellous job. Her firmness is reflected in a note that, quite a while ago, she left for me: “Tempus fugit”, it read - time flies. And she added: “When will I see your next chapter?” As a supervisor, Dr Wierzbicka read through each one of the several versions of the ten chapters of this thesis, providing comments and criticisms wherever necessary. I have been stubborn enough not to accept some of them - a decision which I may come to regret.

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There is one person whom I have not mentioned yet, and to whom I owe more than to anybody else. Her name is Monina, and she is my wife. Her patience can hardly be expressed in words - and this brings me back to the start. It is the first time that I dedicate a major work to somebody; I would like to dedicate it to her.

Bert Peeters
January 1989
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