

Our method(s) of approaching the vast field of human movement studies consists, not of a unitary descriptive "grid" into which we force highly variant cultural data. Rather, we aim to encourage the point of view that "unity" will perhaps emerge from seeing the ordered relations between variants and contexts. This is possible only if one sees "variety," including sometimes incompatible ideologies and beliefs perceived in the systems on the ground, *not* as deviations from an assumed "norm," but as manifestations of intricate sets of rules that, at base, can be seen to reiterate a linguistic truism: the medium (in this case, movement) is the message (Williams 1982: 162-63).

'Movement' or 'Action'?

In semasiology, the broad, ambiguous term 'movement' is separated into two fields, i.e. 'behaviors' which are taken to imply mechanical, causal accounts of movements which are appropriate when agency is either absent or (in a human being) temporarily or permanently destroyed. In contrast, 'actions' are taken to be movements or comprehensive sets of movements which have *agency*, that is, intentions, language-use, meanings, rules. Thus there are organisms and/or animals which monitor their behavior on an elementary or first order level in terms of movement. However, human beings are conceived of as *agents* ('actors', 'persons') whose actions reflect an hierarchy of powers (see Harré and Madden 1975). That is to say that human actions exist in systems consisting of *reflexivity*, simply stated, as people possessing the power to be conscious of being conscious of being conscious -- and so on. From a semasiological point of view, we say that animals 'live' or 'exist' but human beings have *conceptions of living or existing*. Because of this they 'act'. They do not merely 'behave'. It follows that 'to act' is to be able to have models of 'behaving' (Williams 1975: xvi).

An axiom of semantic anthropology is that in dealing with human actions, one is dealing with actions which are suffused with meanings. From this point of view, a scientific description which ignores the meanings of actions is purely metaphysical in a pejorative sense and is not scientifically realistic. If it is true that human beings are language users; that they are rule-, role-, and meaning-makers, then these facts have profound consequences regarding what a human scientific investigation amounts to. Not only does the investigation itself involve symbolic interchange, the objects of semasiological investigation are usually systems of human symbolic exchange (Williams 1975: xiv).

Reflexivity

At the simplest level of our enquiries, we start by asking, "how would the people of some other culture or the users of some other body language expect me to behave if I were a member of that culture or wanted to use their body language?" We ask this because we believe that to explicate the rules of the body language of 'x' is to provide a few beginning answers to that question and at the same time lay the groundwork for a low-level theory of that body language. Because we advocate a self-critical style of anthropological study, we constantly compare the rules of 'x' with the known rules of our own idioms, thus the knowledge that emerges is of a basically reflexive nature (Williams 1982: 164).