

One of the strongest 'roots' of semasiology is reflexivity: first offered to social anthropologists in a paper entitled 'The Idea of a Personal Anthropology' contributed to the 1973 conference of the ASA (held in Oxford) by David Pocock. This essay had profound influences on me and on semasiological theory, but because of opposition to Pocock's idea, the paper was not published until 1994. As it was published in *JASHM*, 8(1): 11-42, no more need be said about it here, since the complete work is readily available. Nevertheless, it is an idea worth thinking about because it raises the issue of 'objectivity' (see Varela 1994: 43-64).

At the same conference, Ardener contributed his now well-known essay 'Some Outstanding Problems in the Analysis of Events' which was not published until five years later (Schwimmer 1978), but it was reprinted fairly soon in Foster and Brandeis (1980), then again in Chapman (1989). Suffice to say here that this essay contains many ideas important to semasiology, for example, "Modes of Specification" (1989[1973]: 92), "A Simultaneity" (1989[1973]: 93) and "The Mode of Registration" (1989[1973]: 95).²⁹

We cannot, however, finish our discussion without reference to a highly significant philosophical component of semasiological theory: two paradigms of action (Harré 1970: 266-268). The significance of these paradigms lies in the fact that it affects the foundations upon which semasiology rests with regard to human movement itself.³⁰

Human Power and Two Paradigms of Action

Paradigm 1. *Descartes Paradigm*. A stationary ball resting on a smooth table is struck by a moving ball. It begins to move and continues moving. The ball which struck the stationary ball continues on but moves less quickly. We are strongly tempted to think of this happening as a transaction in which the totality of the effect is due to the originally moving ball, and to suppose that the stationary ball contributes nothing to the final situation. The second ball which originally was stationary has no intrinsic power of motion, though it can move. Looking deeper and farther into this paradigm, we can ask about the origin of motion of the first ball: that which was originally moving. Did it possess its motion intrinsically did it move of itself? ... This paradigm ... is not a straight metaphysician's crib from the science of mechanics. In that science, the final state of a system of bodies is a product of two factors, an extrinsic factor which is the various states of motion of the balls before they collide, and an intrinsic factor, which is the inertia or mass of the balls. Inertia is ... a negative power, the power to resist indefinite increments of motion ... The application of the Cartesian paradigm requires us to suppose that in all action the effect is completely produced by the impressed or stimulating cause (Harré 1970: 266-67).

²⁹ To review 'the Events paper', as I have others in this volume is impossible because of spatial limitations and because it raises not 'root', but 'branch' issues in semasiology. There will be another time and another opportunity to undertake the task.

³⁰ The citation I use is the same citation as that in the D. Phil. However, Harré and Madden (1975: 82-100--Chapter Five, 'Causal Powers') contains the paradigms, but with fuller discussion of the notion of 'powers' in which some students may be interested.

The crucial point for semasiology has been made: *billiard balls have no intrinsic power to move on their own*. Living human bodies do.

Clearly, if one's aim is to analyze the actions of creatures who possess the nature, capacity and power to move on their own, then applications of the Cartesian paradigm to human movement are exercises in futility.

Paradigm 2. *Van Helmont's Paradigm*. On a fine sunny afternoon, of only moderate heat, and with no breeze to speak of, a man dozes in a deck chair in a garden. There are no flies, nor mosquitoes, nor wasps nor shouts from neighbours' children. Suddenly the man jumps up, walks smartly to the shed, takes out the lawn mower and begins to mow the lawn. Nothing extrinsic to him had changed. The subsequent changes, for example, the smelly racket of the motor mower, are entirely the products of the action of the man, the ultimate causes of which are to be found among states intrinsic to him ... (Harré 1970: 267).

Even when people respond to some external stimulus or another which superficially seems to cause them to act, on a much deeper level they possess the nature, powers and capacities to act which are intrinsic to their selves and to the human estate. Harré goes on to say:

Clearly, the Cartesian paradigm is enshrined in the metaphysics of positivism. If things are nothing but the collocations of their manifested qualities, whether this is given a phenomenalist ring or not, and if causality is but regularity of sequence of like pairs of events, and events are what happens to things, there can be no place for active powers.

There has seemed to be something fishy and soft, occult and mysterious about the second paradigm, and something tough, scientific and empirical about the first paradigm. But what are things, materials and persons really like? Are they like sitting ducks and stationary billiard balls, or are they like loaded guns and sticks of dynamite? Why has the second paradigm seemed fishy when it seems to be so natural and so clearly forced upon us by the way things are? Part of the answer lies in a mistaken epistemology which confines the data, and thus the content, of science to simple truths about sensory qualities manifesting themselves to an observer in particular circumstances, so that all that science can really be about is the obvious and the overt, and all laws but the statistics of the obvious and the overt. It is also partly due to a mistaken metaphysics, in which 'power' is seen as a concept surviving from magic, an occult quality appealing only to those of too tender a mind to face the stern truths of empiricism ... (1970: 268).

Conclusion

I have attempted an overview of the roots of semasiology that will make sense to graduate students interested in the subject roughly thirty years later. However, apart from making sense of semasiology, I want to say that *Van Helmont's Paradigm* (see previous page) could have as easily used the metaphor of a sleeping dancer, a sleeping sign-talk user, or a sleeping martial artist as a sleeping gardener.

A gardener was probably Harré's best choice to illustrate the paradigm because more readers are able to identify with gardeners than they are able to