

The fundamental pronouns: 'someone', 'something'. Dualism vs. monism

There are two, and only two, fundamental and universal, as well as semantically primitive, pronouns which correspond to the two categories just distinguished – animate entities and inanimate objects – and which, from the linguistic-phenomenological point of view, irrevocably solve the issue between dualism and monism in favour of the former.

We are indebted, above all, to Wierzbicka's works, beginning at least with her *Semantic Primitives* (Wierzbicka 1972), for promoting the two primitives mentioned in the heading of this section and their unique binary contradistinction to the role of unshakable pillars of the universal semantic system. This *pronominal* contradistinction has been notoriously left unnoticed, ignored or neglected in philosophical reflection; and largely the same thing applied also to the significance of the pronouns. Of course, all dualists talked, e.g., about spirits and what they perceive (Berkeley), about *res cogitantes* and *res extensae* (Descartes), about rational beings and material things and so on. But the precise contradistinction of objects referred to as *someone* (in concatenations with *know* and *did* or their counterparts in other languages) and objects referred to as *something* is by no means common ground in philosophy. An important contribution to the study of the two pronouns and their philosophical weight is to be found in Spaemann (1996). In my own reflection the pronouns play the part of one of the pivot-stones of the entire analysis; it is easy to see that they figure prominently in nearly all my discussions so far (for one special investigation of some of the relevant linguistic facts, see my (1998b)).

First, there is the pronoun *someone* (*somebody*) as the English representative of the (universally valid) referential designator of knowers/agents. The other pronoun is *something*. This is the English version of the main referential pronominal expression for inanimate objects, applied in an equally universal manner. It will be remembered, however, that the pronoun *something* is also applicable to the remaining two classes of items, attributes and linguistic expressions, without reservations: 'something' covers *whatever* is *not* covered by 'someone'.

The two pronouns are mutually *uninterexchangeable*. Moreover, they can be proved not to be mutually related as inflectional forms of one lexeme. The difference between them is purely *semantic*, as has been shown in my (2004b). In view of the utmost importance of this theme, I shall recall the main points of my discussion below. It is, in particular, *this* circumstance that provides the ultimate foundation for the dualistic outlook (mentioned at the beginning of this section) as the uniquely correct one (and it is, I could say, the *dualistic Weltanschauung* what the present book is all about).

Some thinkers object that whoever posits spiritual entities ("spirits", as Berkeley called them) radically different from material bodies, but somehow governing them, in fact postulates the presence of some mysterious *homunculi* inside human bodies, these

homunculi turning out to be small or tiny entities of the same kind as ordinary (bodily) persons. Such a solution of the mind-body problem leads, so the objection goes, to an infinite chain of ever smaller *homunculi*.

This kind of ridiculing dualism is misconceived from the very beginning. It indeed amounts to indulging in a *petitio principii* where the reduction of everything to bodies is accepted, like a dogma, in advance of the entire debate. The linguistic-phenomenological answer to this quandary is that *homunculi* would anyway have to be classed among the objects called *someone*, not *something*. They could not be just small statues or pictures of mythological beings: such images would certainly be called *something*. Therefore, one had better stop at the starting point where objects called *someone* are simply accepted as ones that can in no way be got rid of and can in no way be reduced to bodies, i.e. to objects called *something*.

Entities named *someone* need not be called souls, spirits and so on. They can usefully be called just that way, viz. “entities named *someone*”. Even so, their “cohabitation” with their living or growing bodies and with the rest of the “material world”, i.e. with all the objects called *something*, can certainly appear to be puzzling to many. But the linguistic-phenomenological outlook allows for things to be puzzling and even predicts them to be so necessarily: primitive concepts will always be (somewhat) mysterious. Mythological narratives (materialistic and non-materialistic alike), which aim to dissipate the philosophical headaches by invoking prejudices, superstitions, misleading imagery and faulty quasi-reasonings, are merely a kind of self-deceit. When turned into philosophical propaganda, they become tools of spreading attitudes that can only be appraised as benighted.

For reasons explained in the *Introduction* to this Chapter, inanimate objects must accompany objects called *someone*. More than that: each object of the latter kind, apart from the Omniscient Being (I shall disregard angels and devils), has a special inanimate object attached to it without which she cannot know anything or act upon anyone or anything. That special object is called her body. It can be defined in the following way, by describing a property of a knower/ignorant *i*:

i did something with someone / something →

→ *i* did something with something _{$c \in C = c' \cup \dots \cup c^n$}

such that (*i* did something with someone / something → *i* did something with *c*).