

Semantics, Culture, and Cognition

*Universal Human Concepts in
Culture-Specific Configurations*



Anna Wierzbicka

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Culture-Specific Configurations*

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Are Emotions Universal or Culture-Specific?

As pointed out in a recent article by Ben Blount (1984:130), "The past decade has witnessed, in contrast to earlier periods, an efflorescence of interest in emotions". Some scholars proclaim the birth of a new science, a science of emotions (cf., for example, Izard's statements quoted in Trotter 1983). One of the most interesting and provocative ideas that have been put forward in the relevant literature is that it is possible to identify a set of fundamental human emotions, universal, discrete, and presumably innate; and that in fact a set of this kind has already been identified. According to Izard and Buechler (1980:168), the fundamental emotions are (1) interest, (2) joy, (3) surprise, (4) sadness, (5) anger, (6) disgust, (7) contempt, (8) fear, (9) shame/shyness, and (10) guilt. (Cf. also, for example, Ekman 1980 and 1989; Johnson-Laird and Oatley 1989.)

I view claims of this kind with scepticism. If lists such as the preceding are supposed to enumerate universal human emotions, how is it that these emotions are all so neatly identified by means of English words? For example, Polish does not have a word corresponding exactly to the English word *disgust*. What if the psychologists working on the 'fundamental human emotions' happened to be native speakers of Polish rather than English? Would it still have occurred to them to include 'disgust' on their list? An Australian Aboriginal language, Gidjingali, does not lexically distinguish 'fear' from 'shame', subsuming feelings kindred to those identified by the English words *fear* and *shame* under one lexical item (Hiatt 1978a:185). If the researchers happened to be native speakers of Gidjingali rather than English, would it still have occurred to them to claim that fear and shame are both fundamental human emotions, discrete and clearly separated from each other?

English terms of emotion constitute a folk taxonomy, not an objective, culture-free analytical framework, so obviously we cannot assume that English words such as *disgust*, *fear*, or *shame* are clues to universal human concepts or to basic psychological realities. Yet words such as these are usually treated as if they were objective, culture-free 'natural kinds'.

The fallacy in question has been exposed very well by Catherine Lutz:

American psychology has taken English emotion words (such as 'fear', 'love', and 'disgust'), has reified what are essentially American ethnopsychological concepts, and has accepted them, often unquestioned, as the conceptual apparatus of scienc-

tific inquiry. Given the limited cultural base, it would be surprising if the emotions, exactly as distinguished, conceptualized, and experienced in American society, emerge as universals. Exactly this has been assumed, however, and then 'proven' by Western researchers (Ekman 1974, Sorenson 1976). While it has been considered of great importance to ascertain whether some non-Western peoples 'feel guilt', the question does not arise as to whether Americans experience the New Guinea Highlanders' emotion of *popokl* 'outrage over the failure of others to recognize one's claims' (Strathern 1968) or whether they are deficient in the ability to experience the Ifaluk emotion of *fago* 'compassion/love/sadness'. (1985b:38)

It is not my purpose to argue against the "assumption of the innateness and universality of the fundamental emotions" (Izard 1969:260) or against the thesis that "the emotions [presumably, the "fundamental" ones] have innately stored neural programs, universally understood expressions, and common experiential qualities" (Izard 1977:18). The search for fundamental emotions, innate and universal, is akin to the search for fundamental concepts ('semantic primitives'), similarly innate and universal, in which I have been engaged for more than two decades (see, in particular, Wierzbicka 1972a, 1980, 1985d, 1989a and b, 1991a and c, and In press e). I want to stress, therefore, that although many scholars may question this undertaking from a position of relativism or narrow empiricism, my own strictures have a totally different basis. I am in sympathy with the attempts to capture what is fundamental, universal, and presumably innate. I am also in sympathy with attempts to discover discrete categories behind the apparent 'fuzziness' of human cognition.

I would like, however, to point to some aspects of the task at hand that so far have not received due attention and that seem to me important. My suggestions can be outlined as follows: (1) If we want to posit universal human emotions we must identify them in terms of a language-independent semantic metalanguage, not in terms of English folk words for emotions (or in terms of English scientific expressions such as "a loss of situational self-esteem" for shame-like emotions). (2) Lexical discriminations in the area of emotions (as in other semantic fields) provide important clues to the speakers' conceptualisations. (3) The study of the interplay between the universal and the culture-specific aspects of emotions must be seen as an interdisciplinary undertaking, requiring collaboration of psychology, anthropology, and linguistics. (4) A considerable amount of lexical data collection, and of serious semantic analysis, is needed before any tenable universals in the area of emotion concepts can be plausibly proposed.

1. The Need for Reductive Analysis

In addition to the reification of English folk categories (such as *anger*, *shame*, or *disgust*), which have been treated as culture-independent realities (cf. Kleinman 1977; Lutz 1985b), the conventional analysis of emotion terms has been plagued, as much as any other semantic domain, by direct or indirect circularity. For example, Izard (1977:288) writes: "Even so common a feeling as that of distress is not altogether easy to describe. To feel distressed is to feel sad, downhearted, dis-

couraged." If one attempts to define one emotion word via others one will never be able to elucidate the meaning of any of them. If one defines *distressed* via *sad* or *downhearted*, the chances are that one is going to define *sad* and *downhearted* via *distressed*, and so on, ad infinitum. No real analysis is performed, only a semblance of analysis. But if emotion terms are decomposed into simpler concepts, such as 'want', 'feel', 'think', 'say', 'good', or 'bad', then there is no threat of overt or covert circularity, and both the similarities and the differences between different emotion concepts are made explicit.

At the same time, a basis is reached for illuminating cross-linguistic comparison of emotions, because although concepts such as 'distress' or 'sadness' are highly language-specific, concepts such as 'want', 'think', 'good', or 'bad' can be presumed to be universal, or at least very widespread across languages and cultures.

2. Cross-Cultural Comparison of Emotions

Consider the Polish words *tęsknota* (noun) and *tęsknić* (verb). Although they have no simple, monolexemic English equivalents, it is possible to explain in English what the relevant feeling is, if one decomposes the complex Polish concept into parts whose names do have simple English equivalents. I think this can be done as follows:¹

X *tęskni* do Y →

X thinks something like this:

I am far away from Y
when I was with Y I felt something good
I want to be with Y now
if I were with Y now I would feel something good
I cannot be with Y now
because of this, X feels something bad

Several English words may come to mind as potential translation equivalents of the Polish word (*homesick*, *long*, *miss*, *pine*, *nostalgia*), but they all differ from one another and from the Polish term as well. For example, if a teenage daughter leaves the family home and goes to study in a distant city, her Polish parents would usually *tęsknić*, but one could not say that they were *homesick* for the daughter, that they felt *nostalgia* for her, and one would hardly say that they were *pining* after her. One could say that they *missed* her, but *miss* implies much less than *tęsknić*. One could say to a friend, 'We missed you at the meeting', without wishing to imply that anything remotely similar to pain or suffering was involved, and yet *tęsknić* does imply something like pain or suffering (in fact, the best gloss I have come across is 'the pain of distance'). The word *miss* implies neither pain nor distance. For example, one can *miss* someone who has died ('My grandmother died recently. You have no idea how much I miss her'). But one would not use *tęsknić* in a case like this, because *tęsknić* implies a real separation in space.

In this respect, *tęsknić* is related to *homesick*. But of course *homesick* implies that the experiencer himself or herself has gone far away from the target of the emotion. The exact similarities and differences between *tęsknić* and *homesick* can be seen if one compares the explication of the former concept, given earlier, with the explication of the latter, given here:

X is *homesick* →

X thinks something like this:

I am far away from my home
when I was there, I felt something good
I want to be there now
if I were there now, I would feel something good
I cannot be there now
because of this, X feels something bad

Pining differs from *tęsknić*, above all, in its single-mindedness and its, so to speak, debilitating effect ('because of this, X can't think of other things'). Furthermore, *pining* does not refer to separation in space; for example, a dog can *pine* for his dead master; by contrast, *tęsknić* can only be used with respect to dead people metaphorically.

X is *pining* after(/for) Y →

X thinks something like this:

I am not with Y
when I was with Y, I felt something good
I want to be with Y now
I cannot be with Y now
because of this, X feels something bad
because of this, X can't think of other things

Longing doesn't refer to separation in space either. More importantly, however, it is future-oriented and includes no reference to the past or to the present. For example, one can *long* to have a baby, but *tęsknić* cannot be used like that: *tęsknota* can have as its target one's real children who are far away but not children who haven't been born yet. (In this respect, *homesick* and *pine* are like *tęsknić*, not like *long*.)

Furthermore, *longing* is not person- (or place-) oriented, as the other words discussed are: one *longs* for something to happen, not for a person or a place.

X is *longing* for Y →

X thinks something like this:

I want Y to happen
because of this, if I could I would do something
I can't do anything
because of this, X feels something bad
when X imagines 'Y is happening', X feels something good

In addition to this basic difference between *long* and *tęsknić*, there seem to be two further ones: *long* is more helpless ('I can't do anything'), and yet it is sweeter, less painful than *tęsknić*—presumably, because it involves an act of imagination (if the feeling of 'not having what one desires' is painful, the 'imagining' that one does have it is sweet).

Miss, as a form of emotion, can be explicated as follows:

X *misses₁*, person Y →
 X thinks something like this:
 I was with Y before now
 when I was with Y, I felt something good
 I cannot be with Y now
 because of this, X feels something bad

X *misses₂*, doing Y →
 X thinks something like this:
 I did Y before now
 when I did Y, I felt something good
 I cannot do Y now
 because of this, X feels something bad

The fact that one can *miss* certain events, or states of affairs, as well as people, highlights the relatively mild nature of the emotion involved. If someone says, "I miss our walks in the forest" or "I miss bowling", he does not want to imply any particular love for the things mentioned. Rather, he wants to imply that he thinks of the things in question as pleasurable, that is, as things that have caused him to feel something good in the past and presumably would cause him to feel something good now.

The absence of acute suffering is shown by the absence of a volitive component ('I want to be with X'). In the case of *tęsknić*, *pine*, *long*, and *homesick*, X wants something that X knows is impossible (e.g., to be at home 'now'), hence the suffering. In the case of *missing*, there is no similar elan toward an inaccessible target.

3. No Word—No Feeling?

English has no word for the feeling encoded in the Polish word *tęsknić*. Does this mean that native speakers of English do not know (never experience) the feeling in question? Not necessarily. Individual speakers of English have no doubt experienced this feeling. But the Anglo-Saxon culture as a whole has not found this feeling worthy of a special name.

Nor does the fact that a language has not encoded a particular emotion in a separate word mean that the speakers of this language cannot perceive that emotion as a distinct, recognisable feeling or that they cannot talk about it. Both everyday speech and psychologically sensitive literature are full of attempts, often highly successful, to convey feelings for which there is no simple word. The following

examples are from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (for more examples and discussion see Wierzbicka 1972a): (1) Kitty Ščerbatskaja is awaiting the decisive visit of Levin and Vronskij: "From after dinner till early evening, Kitty felt as a young man does before a battle" (1953:52) (2) Hitherto, his wife's soul had been open to Karenin: "He felt now rather as a man might do on returning home and finding his own house locked up" (1953:159).

There are countless human emotions that can be perceived as distinct and recognisable. Possibly, all these emotions can be, better or worse, expressed and described in words—in any human language. But each language has its own set of ready-made emotion words, designating those emotions that the members of a given culture recognise as particularly salient. Presumably, these language-specific sets overlap and, presumably, the closer two cultures are, the greater the overlap between their respective sets of emotion words.

But although the absence of a word does not preclude the ability of experiencing an emotion, or of perceiving it as distinct and identifiable, there are good reasons to think that differences in "emotion talk" (Heelas 1984:27) are linked with differences in the emotions themselves. The emotional lexicons of different languages vary considerably, and this points to profound differences between ideas and beliefs about emotions and between cultural models of emotions. But, as Mischel (1977:21) points out, "if people raised in different cultures or sub-cultures come to internalise different ways of describing their experience, this may make what they experience different".

Some scholars have stressed these differences in how people feel in different cultures in very strong terms, for example, Rosaldo:

[I]t seems easier to insist that people elsewhere think differently about their agriculture or gods than to insist . . . that there is nothing universal about such things as happiness and anger. But that the Balinese no more feel 'guilt' than we feel *lek*, the Balinese emotion closest to our 'shame'—and that these differences relate to how we think about the world—is, to me, equally clear. (1984:142)

I think that Rosaldo is making an important point here: that *guilt* is no more a culture-independent psychological construct than *lek* is. But she may be going too far in asserting confidently that the Balinese don't feel guilt. Perhaps they do, and perhaps Americans do feel *lek* sometimes, as they may feel *tęsknota* sometimes, without having a lexicalised concept of either *lek* or *tęsknota*. What is really important, I think, is that the feelings of *lek* and of *tęsknota* are not sufficiently salient in American culture to have merited lexicalisation. And if it is true that "our descriptions of our experience are, in part, constitutive of what we experience" (Mischel 1977:21), then lexical differences between *lek* and *guilt*, or between *tęsknić* and *miss*, may not only reflect but also encourage different, culture-specific, modes of thinking and feeling.

Are there any emotion concepts which have been lexically recognised as distinct and identifiable in all languages of the world?

The evidence available suggests that there are no such emotions. (Cf. Wierzbicka, In press a and b.) Emotions which may appear to be particularly strong

candidates for this status, such as *anger*, *fear*, or *shame*, on closer inspection turn out not to have been universally lexicalised. But this is an issue which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

4. Emotion Terms as Clues to Different Cultures

I believe that the emotion terms available in a given lexicon provide an important clue to the speakers' culture. Arguably, the Polish concept '*tęsknota*' discussed previously is a good case in point.

In older Polish, this word designated a kind of vague sadness, as the related Russian word *toska* does even now. Apparently, it was only after the partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century, and especially after the defeat of the Polish uprising of 1830 and the resulting 'Great Emigration', that this word developed its present meaning of, roughly, 'sadness caused by separation'. When one considers that after that time the best and most influential Polish literature started to develop abroad, among the political exiles, and that it became dominated by the theme of nostalgia, it is hard not to think of the emergence of the new meaning of the word *tęsknota* as a reflection of Poland's history and the predominant national preoccupations.

An even clearer illustration is provided by a whole series of words referring to emotions (and to bodily results of emotions) akin to both sadness and love in the Australian Aboriginal language Pintupi, which demonstrates a degree of love and concern for one's kin and one's land unparalleled in Western culture (cf. Myers 1976; Morice 1977a:105). This is entirely in line with what is otherwise known about Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal society. I will discuss the Pintupi words in question, as well as several other culturally salient emotion concepts from many other languages, in the following chapter.

5. Disgust—Universal or Language-Specific?

Izard (1969) and others hypothesise that feelings such as fear, shame, and disgust are perceived universally as distinct emotions, recognisable by the way they are expressed. It seems to me that this claim would be much more credible if the feelings in question were lexically encoded in all natural languages.

As mentioned earlier, however, I do not wish to rule out the possibility that psychologists may find some universal human emotions, distinct and clearly identifiable, among emotions that have not been widely lexicalised in different languages. I am merely suggesting that emotions proposed as universal, in the sense under discussion, must be identified in terms of a maximally language-independent semantic metalanguage, not in terms of English folk taxonomy. For example, if someone wants to claim that something such as 'disgust' is indeed a universal human emotion, then he or she should identify this emotion in terms of lexical universals or near-universals such as *say*, *want*, *feel*, or *bad* rather than in terms of the English-specific lexical item *disgust*. The fact that the same scholar can sometimes say *disgust* and sometimes *disgust/revulsion* (cf. Izard 1969) wishing to

identify the same “fundamental” emotion, shows the inadequacy of English-specific emotion terms as analytical tools. After all, the words *disgust* and *revulsion* do not mean the same thing; the feelings they identify are different from each other (though not widely different). Which feeling, than, is really claimed to be universal, that designated by the word *disgust* or that designated by the word *revulsion*?

Izard (1969:337) writes: “Theorists since Darwin have suggested that the emotion of disgust may have its origin in biological phenomena associated with the hunger drive and the eating process. The expression of disgust can be simulated by a person posing as though he is refusing or rejecting from the mouth something which tastes bad.”

I think that the image of a person “rejecting from the mouth something which tastes bad” may indeed provide a useful reference point for the feeling identified in English by means of the word *disgust*. But *revulsion* evokes a different image: that of a person who wants to withdraw his or her body from contact with something unwanted, or more than that, something with which the person cannot bear to be in contact. *Repugnance* is associated with a different image again: that of a person who is near (rather than in contact with) something that he or she does not want to be near to and who experiences an impulse to move away from it. (It is similar in this respect to *repulsion*.) *Distaste* evokes the image of a person who has had something in his or her mouth that tasted bad, but it lacks the idea of rejecting anything from the mouth. Accordingly, it suggests a ‘milder’ dislike and a ‘milder’ disapproval than *disgust*. Thus, the feelings identified in English by means of the words *disgust*, *distaste*, *revulsion*, and *repulsion* are different feelings and they cannot all correspond to the same “discrete fundamental human emotion”.

Trying to explicate the concepts in question we cannot always rely on the prototypical image evoked by them. For example, the meaning of the word *fear* cannot be explicated simply in terms of an impulse to run away. Similarly, the synchronic meaning of *disgust* cannot be explicated simply in terms of spitting out and bad taste. At a dinner table, one would be more likely to experience *disgust* watching other people’s behaviour than concentrating on one’s food, no matter how unsatisfactory. One might also experience disgust when thinking of the cook’s incompetence or of his or her dirty habits rather than when focussing on the food as such.

For the same reason, I think, worms or insects are more likely to be called *repulsive* or even *revolting*, than *disgusting*: if one called them *disgusting*, this would sound jocular and anthropomorphic.

The noun *revulsion* does not involve a judgement concerning human action and in fact does not seem to imply a negative judgement of any kind. For example, one can feel revulsion toward mice or frogs without thinking anything bad about them, let alone attributing to them any “bad actions”. *Revulsion* may differ in this respect from the adjective *revolting*: *revolting* food must be thought of as bad food, whereas, for example, slugs don’t have to be thought of as “bad creatures” to cause someone’s revulsion.

The adjective *revolting* may also differ from the noun *revulsion* in another respect: in its apparent link with something like vomiting, which could perhaps be represented as follows: ‘when I think about it, I couldn’t have something in my mouth; if I did I would feel something bad.’

Interestingly, the adjective *revolting* can apply to both things and animals or people (or their behaviour), whereas the adjective *repulsive* appears to apply almost exclusively to living beings: a lecherous old man can be called both *repulsive* and *revolting*, but excrement or food would only be called *revolting*, not *repulsive*.

I think the reason is that bad food may cause one to want to avoid any contact with it (especially, contact through the mouth), but it can hardly cause people to want to avoid being anywhere near it (the presence of bad food behind our back can hardly matter to us). But living creatures, such as rats or people, can have a different effect on people: if they are particularly unpleasant, then even being in close proximity to them can be hard to bear. Being able to move, to look, to breathe, to spit, and so on, they create around themselves a sphere of potential influence, which people may feel like avoiding. To account for both the similarities and the differences in the use of the terms under discussion, the following rough explications can be proposed.²

disgust

X thinks something like this:

I now know: this person did something bad
people shouldn't do things like this
when one thinks about it, one can't not feel something bad
because of this, X feels something bad

X feels like someone who thinks something like this:

I have something bad in my mouth
I don't want this

distaste

X thinks something like this:

Y did something bad
when I think about it, I feel something bad
because of this, X feels something bad

X feels like someone who thinks something like this:

I now had something bad in my mouth

revulsion

X thinks something like this:

Y is in this place
a part of my body could be in the same place
if this happened, I would feel something bad
when I think about it, I can't not feel something bad
because of this, X feels something bad
(of the kind people feel when they think something like this)

(Y is) *repulsive*

X thinks something like this:

Y is near me
I don't want this
when I am near Y, I can't not think that Y is bad
because of this, X feels something bad
(of the kind people feel when they think something like this)

A few explanations are in order.

First, the phrase "I now know" is meant to indicate perception: one feels *disgust*, or *distaste*, when one first realises (sees, hears, etc.) that someone did something "bad", not later.

Second, the references to the mouth in the explication of *disgust* and *distaste* are supported by facial expressions characteristic of these emotions (although *disgust* appears to be also associated with a wrinkled nose; cf. Ekman and Friesen 1975).

Third, *distaste* is, intuitively speaking, a milder emotion than *disgust*. This is accounted for by the difference in tense in the components 'I have something bad in my mouth' (*disgust*) and 'I now *had* something bad in my mouth' (*distaste*), and also by the absence of a volitive component 'I don't want this' in *distaste* and its presence in *disgust* (the *disgusted* person rejects, so to speak, an unacceptable current experience, but *distaste* is more like a kind of unpleasant after-taste).

Fourth, *disgust* implies that something is objectively bad and that other people, too, would feel something unpleasant if they were confronted with it or even if they contemplated it ('when one thinks about it, one can't not feel something bad'); by contrast, *distaste* seems to be more subjective ('when I think about it, I feel something bad').

Fifth, both *revulsion* and *repulsive* are represented here as referring to undesirable objects (or creatures). This may seem too restrictive, as it can also refer to human behaviour and to abstract entities (such as, "revolting rhymes"). It is possible, however, that the uses which are not accounted for by the formulae posited here should be regarded as metaphorical or otherwise extended. Furthermore, the phrase "revolting behaviour" brings to mind above all physical behaviour (for example, by a drunk), and the formula proposed applies in this case, too (one could well shrink from physical contact with a drunk behaving in a revolting manner).

Sixth, the phrasing 'one/I can't not feel something bad' in the explications of *disgust* and *revulsion* (and a parallel component in the explication of *repulsive*) is an attempt to reflect the instinctive character of the negative reactions in question.

Seventh, the explications of *revulsion* and *repulsion* (*repulsive*) may seem circular ('X thinks such and such and feels the way people usually do when they think this'). I don't think there is anything wrong with this kind of apparent circularity, but I regard it as quite likely that further research into emotion concepts may suggest a better phrasing. (Cf. Wierzbicka In press a and c.)

All the points mentioned require further investigation, and the explications sketched should be regarded as no more than first approximations.

What I want to stress here is that the exact boundaries drawn between the related feelings of *disgust*, *distaste*, *revulsion*, and *repulsion* (not to mention *aversion*) are language-specific. For example, Polish has several words that can be used as translation equivalents of the words in question: *niesmak* (roughly, 'distaste'), *wstręt* (roughly, 'revulsion'), *obrzydzenie* (roughly, 'disgust'), *odraza* (roughly, 'repulsion'), *brzydzić się* (roughly, 'feel revulsion for'), but the émigré Polish writer Jan Lechoń, writing his diaries in America, repeatedly uses in his diaries the word *dyzgust*, a loan from English, despite his otherwise puristic attitude to his own Polish (Lechoń 1973). Clearly, Lechoń feels that the Anglo-Saxon concept of 'disgust' has no equivalent in Polish (and I agree). Having developed, under the influ-

ence of Anglo-Saxon culture, a need to use the Anglo-Saxon concept ‘disgust’, he also feels compelled to borrow the word to convey this concept in Polish.

It is particularly worth noting that the English word *disgust* does not mean the same as the related French word *dégoût*. Izard (1969) reports that French and American children show very similar patterns of growth of recognition of individual emotions with age. He notes, however, that with respect to disgust there is an unexpected difference: the French slightly exceed the Americans at most age levels. Izard tries to explain this puzzling fact in terms of greater emphasis placed on the culinary art in French culture:

It is a well-known fact that the French are very proud of their culinary art. . . . The French art of cooking is matched by an equally refined art of eating. . . . The existence of the French traditions in cooking and eating are undoubtedly partly dependent on the parallel processes of teaching and learning fine discriminations in the appearance, smell, taste and texture of differently prepared foods. In these processes, the French child might well be expected to have greater opportunity to witness and to experience the emotion of disgust. (1969:338)

All this is very well, but one crucial point is clearly being missed: that the French word *dégoût* and the English word *disgust* do not mean the same thing. When the French children learn to use the word *dégoût*, they are not learning to recognise and to label the same feeling which American children associate with the word *disgust*. The feeling designated by the word *dégoût* is associated much more closely and much more directly with eating than is that designated by the word *disgust*. Thus, one can say in French *avoir du dégoût pour le lait* (the first example for the use of *dégoût* offered in Harrap’s (1961) *Standard French and English dictionary*). This does not mean that *dégoût* cannot be used in situations in which *disgust* can, but there are situations where *dégoût* can be used and *disgust* cannot. As I have suggested earlier, the English word *disgust* encodes a feeling caused by ‘bad and ugly’ human actions (or their results), not by food as such. This is not to deny that the English concept ‘disgust’ contains a reference to ‘something like bad taste and an impulse to get something out of one’s mouth’, but in ‘disgust’ this reference serves merely as a simile. By contrast, in the concept of ‘*dégoût*’ the reference to the same sensation (‘oral avertive reflex’) constitutes the core of the meaning:

dégoût

X thinks something like this: this is bad because of this, X feels something bad

X feels like someone who thinks this:

‘I have something bad in my mouth’

‘I don’t want this’

This more physical emphasis of *dégoût* is, of course, related to the absence from this concept of the “judgemental” and moral components of *disgust*: ‘this person did something bad’, ‘people shouldn’t do things like this’.

My question is, Is it likely that the language-specific concept encoded in the

English word *disgust* corresponds to a discrete, fundamental human emotion? Why the concept encoded in *disgust* rather than that encoded in the Polish word *obrzydzenie* or *odraza* or in the French word *dégoût*? And if what is meant is not ‘*disgust*’ but a kind of feeling that corresponds equally well to *odraza*, *obrzydzenie*, or *dégoût* as it does to *disgust*, then what exactly is being postulated here as a discrete universal human emotion?

I am not saying that this cannot be spelt out. I am saying that this has to be spelt out if the claim that ‘*disgust*’ (or “something like *disgust*”) is a fundamental human emotion is to have a precise meaning.

6. Shame, Embarrassment, and Fear

The inadequacy of the analytical framework which relies on English folk terms to identify supposedly universal feelings is particularly clear in that part of the spectrum of emotions which includes the feeling that English calls *shame*. English distinguishes shame from both fear and embarrassment, but many other languages draw different conceptual distinctions in this area.

As was noted already by Darwin, the concept of shame (obviously, in the English sense of the word) is associated with a desire not to be seen. Izard (1969:275) writes: “When subjects are asked how they feel or what they do when they experience shame, they very frequently indicate that they want to disappear; they want very badly not to be seen. In a recent film of hypnotically induced fundamental emotions (Izard and Bartlett 1968), the disappearance theme was quite evident. The subject experiencing hypnotically induced shame lowered her head and pulled her legs and arms up very close to her body. On inquiry the subject reported that she was making herself as small as possible in order not to be seen.”

But the closest equivalent of the English word *shame* in the Australian language Gidjingali doesn’t seem to associate the feeling it designates with a desire not to be seen. Rather (as Hiatt 1978a plausibly suggests) it seems to associate this feeling with a desire to retreat, to run away. Consequently, the word in question can be used not only in situations in which the English word *shame* would be appropriate but also in a situation in which the English word *fear* rather than *shame* would be used. From an English speaker’s point of view, shame and fear are two different emotions. But from the point of view of the speakers of Gidjingali, apparently they are not, because both are seen in terms of the same impulse to retreat.

It should also be noted that in the passage on shame quoted (from Izard 1969:275) two prototypical impulses are mentioned side by side: the desire not to be seen and the desire to disappear. I believe that the English concept of shame relies crucially on the former standard rather than the latter. It is striking how the author imposes an interpretation in terms of ‘disappearance’ on a report of an experience couched in terms of a desire not to be seen, not in terms of a desire to disappear. But disappearance may be simply one way of ceasing to be seen, and therefore a desire to disappear may be simply one particular manifestation of a more general desire not to be seen. The desire to disappear is perhaps associated with embarrassment rather than with shame as such.

Many languages of the world (for example, Korean, Ewe in West Africa, and Kuman in Papua) don't lexically distinguish shame and embarrassment. In fact, the same word also seems to be applied to situations in which English would use the word *shy* rather than either *embarrassed* or *ashamed*.

Furthermore, in many non-Western cultures a concept related to 'shame', but by no means identical with it, plays an important social role. In particular, this point has often been made with respect to Aboriginal Australia. For example, Myers (1976:151) writes this about the Pintupi: "The concept of 'shame' [*kunta*] is a cultural form, something which is learned in growing up. . . . The concept . . . is a major construct in the Pintupi view of what it means to be a person and how a person should comport himself in social relations."

According to Myers (1976:171), "the Pintupi concept of *kunta* includes within its range the English concepts of 'shame', 'embarrassment', 'shyness' and 'respect'". The feeling of '*kunta*' is crucially linked with rules of avoidance, which play an important role in regulating conduct in Aboriginal society. Myers writes (1976:148–49): "A number of social relationships are characterised by 'shame' (*kunta*). One should avoid one's 'wife's mother' because of 'shame', and also one should be very restrained with one's 'wife's father' because of 'shame'. . . . The relationship between brothers-in-law is supposed to show 'shame' or 'respect' (*kunta*). This entails a special avoidance language between these peoples. . . . The restrained behaviour of the Pintupi in the public domain is largely a concomitant of the concept of 'shame/respect'. The reluctance to openly disagree with others is based on avoidance of 'embarrassment'."

Myers doesn't really define the concept of '*kunta*', but his discussion of this concept makes it quite clear that although related to 'shame' it is far from identical with it.

The difference between the Australian Aboriginal concepts encoded in words such as *kunta* and the concept encoded in the English word *shame* comes across very clearly in the following account, referring to another Aboriginal language, Ngiyambaa:

The general attitude towards anything to do with white people, whether initially mysterious or not, was avoidance wherever possible. After cars had become commonplace: 'If we was walking along the road and heard a motorcar, we still scooped into the scrub'.

This attitude was partly dictated by fear: 'If we saw anybody with a camera we'd reckon, "They going to shoot us" and run off away and hide. That was a gun, we thought.' But it was also partly the result of *kuyan*, an expression of respectful behaviour usually talked of in English as 'shame' or 'shyness'. Its full force is liable to be missed by non-Aboriginal speakers of English for whom the words shame and shyness rarely have positive connotations. According to the Ngiyambaa scheme of things, *kuyan* is not an uncomfortable feeling to be overcome, but an appropriate and expected reaction in many social situations:

'We were brought up to know right from wrong in our own way. We wasn't cheeky to anyone. We had to respect them for what they were to us in the blacks' law. We carried that out. Our people told us how to treat others that weren't in our tribe, how to treat strangers.'

In the system of etiquette which provided the ground rules for everyday life, various sorts of avoidance were prescribed as the chief means of showing respect—both physical avoidance and restrictions on conversations. . . . So Eliza and her sisters grew up feeling ‘ashamed’ or ‘shy’, as a matter of normal propriety, in the presence of many people, including strangers both black and white. (Kennedy and Donaldson 1982:7)

This account makes it clear that the Aboriginal concept is more closely related to avoidance, and therefore to fear, than the English concept of shame. In a prototypical situation of ‘shame’ something ‘wrong’ has already taken place. The Aboriginal concepts such as ‘kunta’ or ‘kuyan’ seem to evoke a situation when nothing ‘wrong’ has taken place, yet might happen and is to be avoided.

The future orientation of these concepts makes them closer to ‘fear’ than the English concept of ‘shame’, which is focussed on something real, not on something potential. The fact that in a prototypical situation of ‘kunta’ or ‘kuyan’ nothing wrong has happened (yet) makes this feeling closer to ‘embarrassment’ or ‘shyness’ than is English ‘shame’. The fact that in a prototypical situation of ‘kunta’ or ‘kuyan’ the experiencer desires to avoid doing anything ‘wrong’ makes this feeling closer to ‘respect’ than is English ‘shame’. It is understandable why a feeling such as ‘kunta’ or ‘kuyan’ can be used in regulating social conduct in Aboriginal society, in a positive way, in contrast to the negative way in which ‘shame’ or ‘guilt’ is used in Western societies.

It is worth noting, however, that in older English the word *shame* had (as the German word *Scham* still does) a meaning rather different from the one it has now and apparently closer to the concepts encoded in present-day Aboriginal languages. Consider, for example, the following line from Shakespeare, cited in SOED (1964):

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame, no touch of bashfulness?

Clearly, in this passage the word *shame* doesn’t imply anything *shameful* in the modern sense of the word, i.e., anything ‘bad’. A maiden’s ‘shame’ is a feeling which should protect a maiden from something bad, rather than a feeling resulting from something bad.

The Ngiyambaa concept of ‘kuyan’ could perhaps be explicated along the following lines:

kuyan

X thinks something like this:

I am near person Y

this is bad

something bad could happen because of this

people could think something bad about me because of this

I don’t want this

because of this, X feels something

because of this, X wants to do something

X wants not to be near this person

(For an illuminating discussion of the related concept of *getting shame* in Aboriginal English, see Harkins 1988 and 1990.)

A particularly interesting case of a language-specific conceptualisation of 'shame-like' emotions is provided by the Australian language Kayardild (Nicholas Evans, p.c.) In this language there are at least two words that the speakers themselves translate into English as *shame* (although they use also the word *shy*, as an alternative translation of both words). One of these words, *ngankiyaaja*, is based on the word *nganki* 'side of head', and it designates a kind of emotion that men are expected to feel in the presence of their mothers-in-law, or their sisters, whom they are supposed to avoid. The significance of the morphological clue is obvious, in the light of the strong taboo against facing one's mother-in-law or one's sister and against interacting with her directly. Evans reports that he has also heard the same word applied to small children's reaction to strangers (turning the head away in shyness). The other word, *bulwija*, is derived from the word for eyelashes, and it designates a kind of emotion that men and women are expected to exhibit in the presence of potential sexual partners. There, too (as Evans suggests), the meaning of the morphological clue is rather transparent: the lowering of the eyelashes can be expected to prevent the eyes of the two parties from meeting and from sending provocative gazes.

The present-day English concepts of 'shame', 'embarrassment', and 'fear' can, I think, be explicated as follows (for slightly different explications along similar lines, see Dineen 1990; Harkins 1990; Osmond 1990; see also Wierzbicka 1990b and In press c):

(X is) *ashamed*

X thinks something like this:

- people can know something bad about me
- because of this, people can think something bad about me
- I don't want this
- because of this, I would want to do something
- I don't know what I can do
- because of this, X feels something bad

(X is) *embarrassed*

X thinks something like this:

- something happened to me now
- because of this, people here are thinking about me
- I don't want this
- because of this, I would want to do something
- I don't know what I can do
- I don't want to be here now
- because of this, X feels something bad

(X is) *afraid*

X thinks something like this:

- something bad can happen
- I don't want this
- I want to do something because of this
- I don't know what I can do
- because of this, X feels something bad

The concepts explicated here are perfectly discrete, because they can be represented by means of discrete semantic components (for a defence of discreteness in semantic analysis, see Wierzbicka 1985d). But are the feelings corresponding to concepts such as ‘shame’, ‘fear’, and ‘embarrassment’ discrete? Are they universally perceived and conceptualised as discrete, even in those cultures where they are not lexically distinguished from one another? And if not, then in what sense are they “discrete, fundamental emotions common to all mankind” (Izard 1969:265)?

7. Conclusion

In recent psychological literature, the thesis that emotions are “innate, universal” (Izard 1977:17) goes hand in hand with the claim (Izard 1969:265) that “each of these emotions has a characteristic expression or pattern which conveys particular meaning or information for the expresser and the perceiver”. (Cf. also Ekman 1980, 1989; Ekman and Oster 1979.)

Nonetheless, the “analyses of Emotion Recognition tasks” based on these two assumptions “showed some differences between cultures and emotions”. For example, some tests showed that pre-literate subjects in New Guinea failed to distinguish between fear and surprise. Trying to explain this discrepancy between prediction and empirical results, Izard (1969:264) does acknowledge that “it is quite possible that concepts like shame and contempt, and a fine distinction such as that between surprise and fear, will be extremely hard to translate into the spoken languages of preliterate cultures”. But he does not see the linguistic problem as one of fundamental importance: “When we manage to surmount the language and communication barriers, it is entirely conceivable that the other emotions which I have termed fundamental can be validated in the pre-literate cultures.”

But to say this is to underestimate the real conceptual differences between cultures. If a language does not discriminate lexically between, say, shame and fear, then an investigator may be unable to make its speakers perceive fear and shame as two different feelings by somehow simply “surmounting the language and communication barriers”.

Different systems of emotion terms reflect different ways of conceptualising emotions, and conversely, any cross-cultural similarities in the conceptualisation of emotions will be reflected in the ways different societies converge in the labelling of emotions. But the extent of similarities and differences in the labelling and conceptualisation of emotions cannot be assessed without rigorous semantic analysis, and without a language-independent semantic metalanguage.

4

Describing the Indescribable

The idea that “not only ideas, but emotions, too, are cultural artefacts” (Geertz 1973:81), at one time described by a distinguished anthropologist as “complete rubbish” (Leach 1981), is becoming increasingly well documented. (Cf., in particular, Briggs 1970; Geertz 1974; Gerber 1985; Levy 1983; Rosaldo 1980; Scruton 1985; or Lutz 1983, 1985a and b, 1987.)

Solomon (1984:253) writes: “[V]ariation in emotional life is a very real part of cross-cultural differences, and not only in the more obvious variations in circumstances and expression”. To develop this insight as a constructive thesis, he urges, “it would be necessary to turn to a piece by piece investigation of the concepts that make up our various emotions and their complex permutations, side by side with more holistic investigations of a number of other societies, such as those offered us by Levy (1973) and Briggs (1970). The flat-footed question ‘Do these people get angry or not, and if so under what circumstances?’ would be replaced by a broader inquiry into the over-all evaluative-conceptual schemes of appraisal and self-identification that give structure to emotional life. . . .”

It is the purpose of this chapter to undertake such a piece by piece investigation of the concepts that make up a number of different emotions in a number of societies, placing the semantic analysis of the concepts in question in the context of a broader inquiry into the culture. In many cases, it has been claimed that the emotion in question epitomises the culture as a whole. In all cases, it has been claimed that the emotion term in question is ‘untranslatable’, because the concept is unique.

I maintain, however, that no matter how ‘unique’ and ‘untranslatable’ an emotion term is, it can be translated on the level of semantic explication in a natural semantic metalanguage and that explications of this kind make possible that “translation of emotional worlds” (Lutz 1985a) which seems otherwise impossible to achieve.

The format used in the explications which will be proposed requires some discussion. Since, however, this discussion is not essential for my present purpose, I will postpone it until after the present survey. If some readers have doubts or reservations as to the general format used here, they are asked to suspend their judgement on this point until the final section of this chapter.

1. Survey of Some ‘Untranslatable’ Emotion Concepts

1.1 *Amae*: A Concept Representing “the True Essence of Japanese Psychology”

According to Doi (1981:169) *amae* is “a peculiarly Japanese emotion”, although it has “universal relevance”. It is “a thread that runs through all the various activities of Japanese society” (1981:26). It represents “the true essence of Japanese psychology” and is “a key concept for understanding Japanese personality structure” (1981:21). It is also a concept which provides “an important key to understanding the psychological differences between Japan and Western countries” (1974:310).

But what exactly is *amae*? Doi (1974:307–8) is convinced that there is no single word in English (or in other European languages) equivalent to it, a fact that “the Japanese find . . . hard to believe”. Nonetheless, in his writings, Doi has offered innumerable clues which enable us to construct an English version of the concept of *amae*, not in a single word, of course, but in an explication. Doi has himself devoted an entire book (1981) to the elucidation of this concept and its ramifications.

As Doi (1974:307) explains, “*amae* is the noun form of *amaeru*, an intransitive verb which means ‘to depend and presume upon another’s benevolence’”. It indicates “helplessness and the desire to be loved” (1981:22). The adjective *amai* means ‘sweet’, both with reference to taste and with reference to human relations: “If A is said to be *amai* to B, it means that he allows B to *amaeru*, i.e. to behave self-indulgently, presuming on some special relationship that exists between the two” (1981:29).

Amaeru can also be defined “by a combination of words such as ‘wish to be loved’ and ‘dependency needs’” (1974:309). The Japanese dictionary *Daigenkai* defines *amae* as “to lean on a person’s good will” (Doi 1981:72) or “to depend on another’s affection” (1981:167).

But the most useful clue to the concept of *amae* is provided by the reference to the prototype on which this concept is based—a prototype which is not difficult to guess. “It is obvious that the psychological prototype of *amae* lies in the psychology of the infant in its relationship to its mother”; not a new-born infant but an infant who has already realised “that its mother exists independently of itself”; “[A]s its mind develops it gradually realises that itself and its mother are independent existences, and comes to feel the mother as something indispensable to itself; it is the craving for close contact thus developed that constitutes, one might say, *amae*” (1981:74).

On the basis of these and other similar clues we can explicate the concept of *amae* as follows:

amae

X thinks something like this:

Y feels something good toward me

Y wants to do good things for me

when I am with Y nothing bad can happen to me

I don’t have to do anything

I want to be with Y

because of this, X feels something

Doi stresses that *amae* presupposes conscious awareness. The subcomponent 'X thinks . . .' reflects this. The presumption of a "special relationship" is reflected in the component 'Y feels something good toward me'. The implication of self-indulgence is rooted in the emotional security of someone who knows that he is loved: "it is an emotion that takes the other person's love for granted" (1981:168); it is accounted for by the combination of components: 'Y feels something good toward me' and 'when I am with Y nothing bad can happen to me'. The component 'I don't have to do anything because of this' reflects the 'passive' attitude of an *amae* junior, who doesn't have to earn the mother figure's good will and protection by any special actions. The craving for close contact is accounted for in the component 'I want to be with Y'.

What are the reasons for "the prominence of *amae* in Japanese society" (Doi 1981:173)? According to Doi himself (1981:16), and to a number of other observers of Japanese society, this is linked with an "affirmative attitude toward the spirit of dependence on the part of the Japanese". Murase (1984:319) points out that "Unlike Westerners, Japanese children are not encouraged from an early age to emphasise individual independence or autonomy. They are brought up in a more or less 'interdependent' or *amae* culture. . . ". He contrasts the Western culture, which he calls "ego culture", with the Japanese culture, which he calls "*sunao* culture", where *sunao*—like *amae*—symbolises "trustful relationships" fostering "openness and dependence" (1982:325). He also cites some other key words (besides *amae*) which "have been proposed as representing the essential nature of Japanese culture" and notes that they all point in the same direction: "empathy culture" (Minamoto 1969), "maternal principle" (Kawai 1976), "egg without egg-shell" (Mori 1977), and so on.

According to Murase (1982:321–27), the Western "ego culture" is individual-centred, and the personality type which it promotes is "autonomous", "self-expanding", "harsh and solid", "strong", "competitive", "active, assertive, and aggressive"; by contrast, the Japanese "*sunao* culture" is "relationship-oriented", and the personality type which it promotes is "dependent", "humble, self-limiting", "mild and tender", "flexible and adaptable", "harmonious", "passive, obedient, and non-aggressive". The relationships fostered by the "ego culture" are "contractual", whereas the relationships fostered by the "*sunao* culture" are "unconditional". Murase links this with the prevalence of the "maternal principle" in Japan as against the prevalence of the "paternal principle" in the West. He also stresses such specifically Japanese values as "adaptation through accommodation", "conformity, or the merging of self and other", "a naive, trusting and empathic relationship with others", "obedience and docility" ("without the negative connotation in English"), and, again and again, "dependence".

It seems to me that these features of Japanese culture are indeed highly consistent with the prominence of the feelings of loving dependence elucidated by Doi (1974 and 1981). I hope that the explication of this crucial concept proposed here can help to make it a little more intelligible to the cultural outsider. (For further discussion of *amae* and a number of related concepts see Wierzbicka, 1991b.)

1.2 Respect and Etiquette: The Javanese Concept of *Sungkan*

According to Hildred Geertz (1974:257–58), *sungkan* “is something peculiarly Javanese”. It is one of “three Javanese words, *wedi*, *isin*, and *sungkan*, which denote three kinds of feeling states felt to be appropriate to situations demanding respectful behavior”.

The fundamental role of “respectful behavior” in Javanese culture is well known from the writings of Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz, and other scholars. It is reflected in a number of Javanese words and other linguistic devices which have no exact equivalents in European languages. To begin with, “the central concept of ‘respect’ (*urmat*, *adji*) is a notion so peculiarly Javanese that it cannot be easily translated” (Geertz 1974:257).

But what is ‘untranslatable’ on the level of words is nonetheless translatable on the level of universal semantic primitives and near-primitives. Since the limitations of space prevent any detailed discussion of all the Javanese emotion concepts mentioned by Geertz, I will confine myself here to an attempt to ‘translate’ into a universal semantic metalanguage that one which Geertz presents as the most peculiarly Javanese: the concept of *sungkan*.

Hildred Geertz (1974:259) writes: “Roughly speaking, *sungkan* refers to a feeling of respectful politeness before a superior or an unfamiliar equal, an attitude of constraint, a repression of one’s own impulses and desires, so as not to disturb the emotional equanimity of one who may be spiritually higher. . . .” “If a delegation of official visitors comes to my house and they sit at my table, I sit off in a chair in the corner; that’s *sungkan*.” “If a guest comes to my house and I give him dinner, I say, ‘*sampun sungkan-sungkan*’ [don’t be *sungkan*] and I mean, ‘Don’t stand on ceremony, eat a lot as if you were in your home.’”

In the socialisation, that is, “javanisation”, of a Javanese child, *sungkan* comes at the end, after *wedi* (roughly, ‘fear’) and *isin* (roughly, ‘shame/guilt’). It is the “last, culminating, ultra-Javanese kind of respect” (Geertz 1974:260), and it is a sign of refinement. In fact, “some village people in Java do not . . . make the distinction between *isin* and *sungkan*, considering the latter simply a more refined synonym. They associate the word with the world of aristocratic townsmen and its ranks and values, where the ritual of politeness is practiced with subtlety and sensitivity. To know *isin* is simply to know the basic social properties of self-control and avoidance of disapproval, whereas to know *sungkan* is to be able to perform the social minuet with grace” (1974:259).

But from Geertz’s discussion it is quite clear that *sungkan* is not merely a refined synonym of *isin*. It is a word which designates a special emotional attitude cultivated by Javanese townspeople, an attitude which—unlike *isin*—doesn’t seem to have semantic equivalents in any other parts of the world. This attitude can be portrayed as follows:

sungkan

X thinks something like this:
I cannot do what I want
another person is here

this person is not someone like me
 this person could feel something bad if I did what I want
 this person could think something bad of me
 I don't want this
 I want this person to think something good of me
 because of this, X feels something
 because of this, X doesn't do some things
 because of this, X does some things

An emotional attitude of this kind is so elaborate, and implies such a complex conceptual structure, that it is not surprising that it takes years to acquire and that it has to be taught, for years, at home and at school. "How does the child learn this last, culminating, ultra-Javanese kind of respect? He has already learned an acute awareness of other people's moods and opinions, an attitude of tuning in on the desires of the other person, through his education in *isin*. And towards the end of the second phase he has begun to learn self-renunciation and impulse-control, for now he is likely to have a younger sibling to care for, one who, like himself as an infant, may not be permitted to be frustrated or upset. And now his father, formerly warm and affectionate, like an 'insider', begins to act like an 'outsider' toward him, and to expect him to behave in his presence according to the social forms appropriate to outsiders. The child finds himself now feeling *isin* in front of his father, and being told, moreover, to be *sungkan* in his presence" (Geertz 1974:260).

Geertz's comments on the importance of the "emotional lexicon" as an instrument of socialisation and acculturation seem to me penetrating and insightful. In particular, she points out (1974:262) that "the cultural system . . . provides recipes for the child's reactions" to the "various transitions through which he must pass". "The culture presents not only a set of suggested answers on *how to behave* in these situations, but also clues to *how to feel* about his actions."

The crucial point is that these clues are encoded in the emotion terms provided by a given culture. If we manage to decode such terms and to translate them into a universal semantic metalanguage, we can make the cultural recipes provided by different cultures comparable and intelligible to outsiders.

1.3 *Liget*: The Driving Force of the Headhunting Ilongots

As shown by Rosaldo (1980), the concept of *liget* is of fundamental importance in the culture of the Ilongot tribe of the Philippines. Glossed as 'energy, anger, passion', *liget* is clearly the driving force in the lives of the Ilongots. It expresses itself equally in the passion to kill as in the passion to work. It implies vitality and fierceness, a will to compete, and a will to triumph. "Without liget to move our hearts," the Ilongots say, "there would be no human life" (1980:47). In fact, even babies "are the product of male *liget*, 'concentrated' in the form of sperm".

By a revealing metaphorical extension, *liget* is also ascribed to certain inanimate objects and to the forces of nature, such as chili pepper, liquor, storm, wind, rain, or fire. *Liget* suggests here "potency, energy, intensity, the irritating heat of chili

peppers, the rush of rapids, or the force of wind" (Rosaldo 1980:45–46). *Liget* implies not only "energy and irritation, but also a sense of violent action and of intentional shows of force". Typically, *liget* is born not so much of inherent qualities of things as of their interaction. For example, "tobacco gives desired *liget* to the yeast that people use in making wine. Winds grow fiercer when they bump into a fence or an obstruction; an irritating whiff of ginger revitalises 'passion' in a killer; chili can give *liget* to a stew".

In human life, however—which is the basic domain of *liget*—*liget* is typically born of 'envy', of a desire to compete and to triumph over one's equals.

Manifestations of *liget* in human life can be manifold, focussed or chaotic, productive or destructive. *Liget* can express itself in "fierce work", when one's heart "goes beyond its limits" (Rosaldo 1980:46) and when one sweats and pants in quest of admiration and envy. It can also express itself in fierce killing and in celebration of killing.

"Concentrated *liget* is what makes babies, stirs one on to work, determines killers, gives people strength and courage, narrows vision on a victim or on a task" (Rosaldo 1980:48–49). Good *liget* "is realised in activity and purpose, in a willingness to stay awake all night and travel far when hunting, in a readiness to climb tall trees or harvest in hot sunlight, in an aura of competence and vitality". But bad *liget* is frightening, "paralysing and confusing"; it can lead to "sporadic bursts of basket-slashing, knife-waving violence".

Liget plays a key role in the conceptualisation of experience: "Ilongots use the vagaries of *liget* as a frame for understanding their experience at the same time that they experience it as difficult to control" (Rosaldo 1980:51). "The energy that is *liget* can generate both chaos and concentration, distress and industry, a loss of sense and reason, and an experience of clarification and release. These various possibilities are imaged in terms that link the emotional dilemmas of individual human actors to certain general conditions of human existence. . . ; these constitute a system that embodies not only the core of Ilongot emotion, but also the stuff of life and human effort as Ilongots in their reflections know them" (1980:47).

Rosaldo makes it clear that the concept of *liget* plays an absolutely essential role in the Ilongot culture. But what exactly is *liget*? Rosaldo herself is at pains to show that *liget* is a unique Ilongot concept with no equivalent in English, and that it reflects attitudes different from those codified in Western culture. Nonetheless some other anthropologists were able to conclude from Rosaldo's data that *liget* is essentially the same as the English *anger*. For example, Spiro writes:

I would suggest that it is not the case, insofar as anger is concerned at least, that 'in important ways [Ilongot] feelings and the ways their feelings work must differ from our own' (Rosaldo [1984]). To be sure, their anger seems to be much more intense than ours, and its expression is much more violent, but, these quantitative dimensions aside, their anger and ours seem to work in similar ways. They, like we, get angry when frustrated, and they, like we, usually repress their anger in culturally appropriate contexts only to express it symbolically in culturally appropriate ones. This indicates, I would suggest, that human feelings and the ways in which they work are determined not so much by the characteristics of particularistic culture

patterns but by the transcultural characteristics of a generic human mind.
(1984:334)

In my view, there is no reason why someone's faith in the existence of certain "transcultural characteristics of a generic human mind" should be undermined by data such as those concerning the Ilongot conceptualisation of emotions, but the confident identification of the Ilongot concept of *liget* with the English concept of *anger* seems to me to involve a serious error.

Careful examination of the evidence shows that the differences between *liget* and *anger* are not quantitative but qualitative, and that in fact the two words embody two entirely different (though overlapping) concepts. The following explications make these qualitative differences explicit:

liget

X thinks something like this:
 other people can do something
 they could think that I can't do it
 I don't want this
 because of this, I want to do something
 I can do it
 because of this, X feels something
 because of this, X wants to do something
 when someone feels like this, they can do things
 that they can't do at other times

angry

X thinks something like this:
 this person (Y) did something bad
 I don't want this
 I would want to do something bad to this person
 because of this, X feels something bad toward Y
 because of this, X wants to do something

(For a slightly different analysis of 'anger', see Wierzbicka, In press a and Forthcoming. See also Goddard 1991.) As these explications show, *liget* has a competitive character and is related to envy and ambition, but there is nothing like that in the concept of *anger*. *Anger* has its basis in the thought that 'someone did something bad', but there is nothing like that in the concept of *liget*.

Consequently, *anger* implies a negative feeling toward the target person ('because of this, X feels something bad toward Y'), but *liget* doesn't. In fact, *liget* doesn't imply that there is any specific target person at all. Moreover, the feeling associated with *liget* doesn't have to be a 'bad feeling'. It can be a 'bad feeling', but it can also be an intoxicatingly 'good feeling' (depending on one's perception of one's chances of success).

It is true that both *anger* and *liget* are likely to hurt somebody, that is, to cause someone to 'feel something bad'. But in the case of *liget*, one doesn't necessarily have an urge to hurt somebody, as one does in the case of *anger* (whether or not one

acts on that urge is another matter). The fierce headhunter kills not because he wants to hurt, to punish, to inflict pain, but because he wants to prove to himself and to others that he is as good as anybody else (and perhaps better). There is nothing like that in the concept of *anger*.

Furthermore, the person who is likely to get hurt through *liget* may well be the experiencer of *liget* himself. When one is sweating and panting in “fierce” work, one is disregarding one’s own ‘bad feelings’ (tiredness, aches, pain, and so on). One is determined not to let such ‘bad feelings’ (whether in oneself or in another person) interfere with one’s action. This is ruthless determination, which “narrows vision on a task”, not an urge to hurt.

Finally, *liget* spurs people to action, gives them strength and courage, enables them to go beyond their limits, and leads them to achievements and to triumphs. This is reflected in the component ‘when someone feels like this, they can do things that they can’t do at other times’. Since, however, *liget* can also lead to destructive and unplanned actions, for example, “basket-slashing, knife-waving violence”, the things that one can do because of *liget* are not described in the explication as ‘good things’, or as ‘things that one wants to do’.

It seems to me that the explication of *liget* sketched here accounts correctly for the entire range of this concept’s use, as reported by Rosaldo, and explains adequately “the ambivalence surrounding *liget*” and deriving “from the fact that it can lead in a variety of directions” (Rosaldo 1980:47). Anger is not similarly ambivalent, and if it is not repressed or sublimated, it can lead only in one direction, that of intentionally ‘doing something bad to someone’.

I conclude that the Illongot concept of *liget* is indeed unique and cannot be identified with the English concept of *anger*. If there are any “transcultural characteristics of a generic human mind”, conceptualisation of emotions in terms of either *anger* or *liget* is certainly not among their number. It is an illusion to think that “in the human being the expression of anger and the experiential phenomenon of *anger* are innate, pan-cultural, universal phenomena” (Izard 1977:64). There is no reason to think that *anger* is any more ‘innate’, ‘pan-cultural’, or ‘universal’ than *liget*.

1.4 Emotions on a Pacific Atoll: Ifaluk Feeling States

Lutz (1985a:83) paints a vivid and rather moving picture of human existence on the tiny Ifaluk atoll in the Western Pacific. “Seen from a steamship offshore, the atoll of Ifaluk seems a tightly bounded and somewhat precarious community, sitting as it does at most fifteen feet above sea level in an area of frequent typhoons and few neighboring islands. Four hundred thirty people share one-half square mile of land, and survive through fishing, the gathering of fruits and coconut and taro cultivation. The cooperative and non-aggressive patterns they have successfully developed, in part in response to these material conditions, have made for dense networks of connections between individuals.”

What do people living on the Ifaluk atoll feel? How do they talk about their emotions? How do they conceptualise their feelings? Lutz has tried to explore these questions in a number of careful studies (1982, 1985a and b, 1987). The following

analysis is based entirely on her data and on her observations. (For an earlier version of this analysis, see Wierzbicka 1988a.)

1.4.1 Fago

Lutz (1987) glosses the Ifaluk word *fago* by means of three English words: *compassion*, *love*, and *sadness*. In an earlier article on the same subject (Lutz 1982), *fago* is glossed as *love*. It is obvious that this word has in fact no exact equivalent in English and that it expresses some concept which is more salient in the Ifaluk culture than in Western culture. But what concept?

Lutz mentions the following situations as likely triggers of the feeling of *fago*: illness, a departure from the island, lack of food. In her view, this feeling has a hidden “goal” which can be formulated as follows: “change the situation, by filling the need of the unfortunate party” (1987:301). Actions which naturally follow from the feeling of *fago* include the following: to give the target person food, to cry, to speak to him or her kindly (1985a:295).

As a first approximation, I propose the following explication of the core sense of *fago*:

fago

X thinks of person Y

X feels something good toward Y

X thinks something like this:

something bad can happen to a person

when something bad happens to someone, some people should do

something good for this person

I don't want bad things to happen to Y

when X thinks that something bad can happen to Y, X feels something bad
because of this, X wants to do something good for Y

This explication does not fit all the situations when *fago* can be used (as described, in particular, in Lutz 1988). The range of these situations, however, is so broad that I don't think any unitary formula could be proposed for them, beyond the following three components:

X is thinking of person Y

X feels something good toward Y

X wants to do something good for Y

But a broad formula such as this would fail to account for the links between *fago* and *compassion* and *sadness*, repeatedly emphasised by Lutz. I suspect, therefore, that *fago* may be polysemous and that two different sense of this word should in fact be distinguished: the core sense explicated here and the more peripheral sense, which is closer to something like admiration than to something like compassion or sadness. Lutz (1988:137) describes this second type of *fago* as follows:

While most of the contexts in which the word *fago* is used represent major or minor disasters for those involved, the emotion is also importantly linked to encounters with people whom the Ifaluk define as exemplary in crucial kinds of ways. As one person told me, “You *fago* someone because they do not misbehave. You *fago* them because they are calm and socially intelligent.”

The formula proposed in the present chapter is not meant to cover this second use of *fago*, for which a separate formula would probably be needed.

Nonetheless, the formula proposed here is still very comprehensive, and it covers a wide range of types of situations. In particular, it applies not only to people to whom something bad has already happened but also to those to whom something bad might happen. For example, it could apply to the feelings of a woman who heard “her younger brother singing as he fished from his canoe in the lagoon” and who said, as she heard him, “I had a bit of *fago* for him” (Lutz 1988:121). Apparently, nothing bad has happened to the young man yet, but his sister appears to think of him as vulnerable (as well as dear), and this thought activates her desire to protect him and to do good things for him.

The explication proposed here would also account for the fact that *fago* is seen “as an emotion that can prevent violence. . . . If one feels *fago* for a potential victim, the desire to hurt is short-circuited. In socializing children, a parent’s appeal to *fago* is often made as a way of promoting gentle (as well as generous) behavior” (Lutz 1988:136).

Can the explication proposed here account for the association between *fago* and death? The fact that “the dying person is the prototypical object of *fago*” is easily accounted for in terms of this explication (one doesn’t want something bad to happen to the dying person, one wants to do good things for him or her, and one is very much aware that bad things can happen to a person and that one should try to do good things for those to whom they happen). It is less obvious that the same explication applies also to *fago* which occurs *after* somebody’s death, as in the following case: “The last time I [experienced] *fago* was when our ‘mother’ died two days ago. We really felt bad inside. It was like our insides were being torn. We beat our chests and scratched our faces because our *fago* was so strong. because there is no other time that we will see her” (Lutz 1988:125). But, in fact, I believe that the proposed formula applies here, too: the grieving woman who beats her chest and scratches her face does not (yet) accept the fact that “something bad” has happened to her mother, and she still wants to do good things for her (although there is perhaps nothing, or little, that can be done).

In other cases, it is the awareness that something bad has happened to a person (often, a stranger) that gives rise to a desire to do something good for him or her. (For example, “‘we *fago* the new students [the freshmen] because they aren’t used to Ulithian custom, and they don’t know all of the taboos that exist there’. Implied here is that the boys must be anxious or afraid (. . .) in the new and unfamiliar setting” (Lutz 1988:135).)

It seems to me that the formula proposed is sufficiently vague and comprehensive to cover all these different cases of *fago* (though not those similar to admiration).

If this analysis of *fago* is even approximately correct, then *fago* does not have very much in common with *sadness* (cf. Wierzbicka, In press a and c). Nonetheless, here, as in *sadness*, there is an incompatibility between the real ('something bad can happen to a person') and the desired ('I don't want bad things to happen to Y'). In the case of *sadness*, however, this incompatibility takes a different form ('something bad happened'—'I would want: it didn't happen').

The closest English counterpart of the concept *fago* seems to be *compassion*. But the fact that bilingual informants gloss *fago* as *love* rather than *compassion*, and that Lutz, too, finds it necessary to add *love* and *sadness* to *compassion* in her gloss, suggests that *fago* is both 'warmer' and 'stronger' than *compassion*. Trying to capture both the similarities and the differences between *fago* and *compassion* I propose the following explication for the latter:

compassion

- (a) X thinks something like this:
- (b) something bad happened to Y
- (c) because of this, Y feels something bad
- (d) if it happened to me, I would feel something bad
- (e) when X thinks this, X feels something good toward Y

What *compassion* and *fago* share is the component 'X feels something good toward Y', linked with the idea of 'bad things happening to Y'. But *compassion* is much more specific in this respect than *fago*: *compassion* presupposes that something bad has already happened to Y, whereas *fago* allows for the possibility that nothing bad has happened yet but that the experiencer sees the target person as vulnerable and in need of protection.

Furthermore, *compassion* does not imply an active attitude ('X wants to do something good for Y') or the more general assumption that 'if something bad happens to someone, some people should do something good for this person'. *Fago*, Lutz (1985a:85) points out, is "a sadness that activates", but in the case of *compassion* neither the 'twinge in the heart' nor the 'warm feeling' towards the unfortunate person has to be sufficiently strong to lead to an urge to do something for that person. The concept of *compassion* differs in this respect from the concept of *love* (as in "X loves person Y", which always carries such an implication ('X wants to do something good for Y'); cf. Wierzbicka 1986c). But of course the Western concept of *love* is not limited to situations when something bad is happening to the target person. It implies a kind of universality (in the sense that it can be addressed to anybody and under any circumstances); but it is also individual and personal (in the sense that it implies a personal bond with the target person). It can be explicated as follows:

love (X loves person Y)

- (a) X knows Y
- (b) X feels something good toward Y
- (c) X wants to be with Y
- (d) X wants to do good things for Y

The concept of *fago* doesn't include component (a) (it can be extended to strangers) or component (c) (which suggests a kind of personal attraction to another person). It does contain, however, components (b) and (d).

Clearly, the explication of *love* given here doesn't fit sentences like 'I love cottage cheese' or 'I love opera'. If one 'loves' cottage cheese or opera, one doesn't want to cause good things to happen to these things. This, however, is a different meaning of *love*. In support of this claim, I would adduce the following evidence: In sentences with inanimate objects, *love* is used hyperbolically, as an emphatic and deliberately exaggerated substitute for the unmarked and expected word *like*. The speaker wants to convey something along the following lines: 'I like it so much that I don't want to use the word which one would normally expect (*like*); I want to use a different word, which says more than that'. Consequently, when used with inanimate objects, *love* is usually endowed with special prosodic clues, which signal an expressive emphasis and an emotional attitude to the subject matter. In addition to prosodic clues, the emphatic exaggeration can also be signalled by particles, especially by *just*. A sentence such as 'I love cottage cheese' conveys something similar to what is conveyed by the sentence 'I just *love* cottage cheese'. But the sentences 'Robin loves Hilary' and 'Robin just *loves* Hilary' are not similarly close. It is normal for a mother to love her baby, but it would be odd to hear that somebody 'just *loves*' her baby. There are reasons, therefore, to distinguish the use of *love* as a hyperbolic emphasiser from its use as an ordinary verb.

A situation where a language doesn't have a word for *love* in general but does have a word combining 'good feelings' toward other people with elements of compassion, pity, or protectiveness (toward the unfortunate, weak, or helpless) is known from many other languages of the world (cf., for example, Levine's (1981) data for Tibetan; Briggs' (1970) data for Utku Eskimo; or Gerber's (1985) data for Samoan, some of which are mentioned in this chapter). This is a point which may be familiar to anthropologists but appears to have gone unnoticed in the majority of psychological literature on emotions. For example, Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1971), author of a book entitled *Love and hate: on the natural history of basic behaviour patterns*, apologises for extending, on occasion, the terms *love* and *hate* to animals, but he has not the slightest doubt that they can be extended, unreservedly, to all humans, and that they provide 'natural', 'basic' clues to human psychology. He writes (1971:6): "In this book I make quite frequent use of the term 'love'. By this I mean not only sexual love but more generally the emotional, personal bond between one man and another or the bond arising from identification with a particular group. The counterpart of *love* is *hate*. . . . Strictly speaking we can only use the terms 'love' and 'hate' in this sense in the case of man."

What most psychologists do not seem to realise is that *love* is no more a "basic human behaviour pattern" than *fago* is. The concept of *love* is not a universal human concept; it is not clear why one should regard *love* as more 'human' or more 'basic' than *fago*.

Of course different people can attach different importance to different concepts. It could be argued that the modern European concept of *love* (*amour*, *Liebe*, *amore*, and so on) is particularly important and that the emergence of this concept in Western folk philosophy constitutes a significant stage in the development of human

ideas and human values. But whatever one thinks about the significance of *love*, it is an illusion to think that it is a universal, ‘natural’, or ‘basic’ human concept. It is no more such a concept than *fago* is.

1.4.2 Song

Lutz glosses the Ifaluk word *song* as ‘justifiable anger’. Her discussion shows clearly, however, that this word doesn’t mean the same as the English word *anger*, and not only because *song* is supposed to be ‘justifiable’. Evidently, *song* is a less aggressive feeling than *anger*, a feeling which is less likely to lead to physical violence. Typically, *song* manifests itself in reprimands, refusal to eat, or pouting. What is more, in some cases *song* can lead to suicide, or in any case to an attempted suicide. The hidden “goal” of *song* is, according to Lutz (1987:301), “to change the situation by altering the behaviour of the offending person”, but the actions caused by *song* are often directed toward oneself rather than toward the guilty person (for example, an attempted suicide rather than an attempted murder). From an earlier article on the same subject (Lutz 1982:121) we learn that *song* is regarded as “good for people (and especially parents) to feel and express when a wrongdoing has occurred. It is only through the observation of their parents’ *song* in particular situations that children are said to learn the difference between right and wrong.” Accordingly, people in a higher position, who are responsible for other people’s behaviour, can be expected to feel and show *song* particularly frequently. “An elder is more often *song* (justifiably angry) at a younger person, than at a peer or at a higher-ranked individual. The chiefs are often said to be *song* at those who have broken rules or taboos” (1982:122).

All of these observations indicate that the concept of *song* differs from the concept of *anger* and suggest the following conceptual structure:

song

- (a) X thinks something like this:
- (b) this person (Y) did something bad
- (c) people should not do things like this
- (d) this person should know this
- (e) because of this, X feels something bad
- (f) because of this, X wants to do something

This is certainly close to the conceptual structure of *anger*, but it is by no means identical to it, as shown by the following explication, repeated from the previous section for the reader’s convenience:

anger

- (a) X thinks something like this:
- (b) this person (Y) did something bad
- (c) I don’t want this
- (d) I would want to do something bad to this person
- (e) because of this, X feels something bad toward Y
- (f) because of this, X wants to do something

Component (b) is identical in both cases: ‘person Y did something bad’. Component (c), however, is in each case different. In the case of *song*, component (c) suggests that there is something ‘objectively’ wrong about Y’s action (‘Y shouldn’t do things like this’); in the case of *anger* component (c) suggests that what is involved is the personal will of the experiencer, rather than an objective evaluation (‘I don’t want this’).

This difference in component (c) is logically linked to a difference in component (e): in both cases, X feels ‘something bad’, but in the case of *anger* this feeling is directed toward the culprit (‘X feels something bad toward Y because of this’), whereas in the case of *song* the feeling is not oriented specifically toward anyone (‘X feels something bad’).

This difference in component (e) is linked, in turn, with a difference in component (d): in the case of *anger*, the negative feeling is directed toward the guilty person and it leads to an urge to do something bad to that person (‘I would want to do something bad to Y because of this’); in the case of *song*, the urge to do something is not oriented toward anyone, and it can express itself in a refusal to eat as much as in a reprimand (‘X wants to do something because of this’). This doesn’t mean, of course, that *song* can express itself in any action whatsoever. All the actions mentioned by Lutz (a reprimand, a refusal to eat, a pout, an attempted suicide) have a common denominator: X wants Y to know that Y has done something bad and reprehensible and to draw consequences from this. Hence the need for component (d): ‘Y should know this’.

Lutz observes that the Ifaluk culture enjoins people to avoid aggression and that in its hierarchy of values it ranks this injunction much higher than Western culture, and in particular, than American culture: “[A]lthough both the Ifaluk and Americans may have the goal of avoiding violence, rules of physical aggression in the two societies and beliefs about those rules are in dramatic contrast, in part due to cultural differences in the importance attached to that goal” (1987:299–300).

The fact that the Ifaluk language has no word corresponding to the English word *anger* and that the closest Ifaluk counterpart of this concept is much ‘softer’ and closer to *reproach* seems to constitute a lexical confirmation of this difference between the two cultures. In the explications proposed earlier the conceptual relations in question are portrayed clearly and explicitly.

1.4.3 Ker

Lutz (1987) glosses the Ifaluk word *ker* as ‘happiness/excitement’, thus making clear that it cannot be matched exactly with any one English word. But the meaning of *ker* can be established on the basis of the information about the behaviour typically associated with the feeling in question. Typically, people who feel *ker* laugh, talk a lot, “misbehave”, “walk around”, neglect their work, show off, and so on. According to Lutz, the hidden “goal” of the feeling of *ker* consists in “making use of the resources of the situation” and in “maintaining the situation”.

Ker is an emotion “people see as pleasant but amoral. It is often, in fact, *immoral* because someone who is happy/excited is more likely to be unafraid of other people. While this lack of fear may lead them to laugh and talk with people, it

may also make them misbehave or walk around showing off or ‘acting like a big shot’” (Lutz 1988:167).

All these clues together suggest the following conceptual structure:

ker

- (a) X thinks something like this:
- (b) something good is happening to me
- (c) I want this
- (d) because of this, X feels something good
- (e) because of this, X doesn’t think of what other people would think of X
- (f) because of this, X could do things that X shouldn’t do

The first three components of this explication taken together correspond roughly to the concept of *joy*, although it appears that *joy* is less egocentric than *ker* and at the same time a little more ‘reflective’ (thoughtful), that is, that it is based on the thought ‘something good is happening’ rather than ‘something good is happening to me’. (*Happiness*, like *ker*, is egocentric, and it is based on the thought ‘something good happened to me’ (cf. Wierzbicka, In press a and c).)

In contrast to *joy* and *happiness*, however, *ker* implies a lack of concern for other people’s reactions (component (e)) and, as a consequence, a danger of moral transgressions (component (f)).

If *joy* implies a thought of something good that is happening, *excitement* implies a thought of something that is to happen in the near future. Roughly (ignoring here the difference between *feeling excited* and *feeling excitement*; cf. Wierzbicka 1980:104):

excitement

- (a) X thinks something like this: something good will happen to me now
- (b) because of this, X feels something good
- (c) because of this, X can’t think of other things

Excitement, in contrast to *ker*, doesn’t suggest that the person in question is likely to ‘misbehave’. Moreover, *excitement* differs from *ker* in its temporal perspective: *ker* is rooted in the present, and this is why it can constitute a loose translation equivalent for both *happiness/joy* and *excitement*. If *happiness* involves something that has already happened, and *joy*, something that is happening *now*, *excitement* involves something that will happen in the near future. *Ker* doesn’t presuppose a similar distinction, embracing in its temporal perspective a broadly understood ‘present time’, which can include both recent events that have already happened and forthcoming events (that are going to happen soon); as long as these events are so vivid in the experiencer’s mind that they temporarily obscure everything else, including the sense of duty and the sense of propriety.

1.4.4 Nguch

According to Lutz (1982:119), *nguch* “is a much-used emotion word that labels feelings in situations where one must accept that one’s individual goals are

thwarted". It is used "in daily life to describe the frustration engendered by the obedience required to those of higher rank". But it can also be engendered by monotonous work, or by "a noxious but unavoidable situation" such as repeated requests for tobacco from a mentally retarded youth. "If a woman has been grating coconut in the midday heat for three hours, she will often declare herself *nguch*. If someone makes repeated requests for cigarettes or some other object, that request cannot be legitimately denied, but the severe drain on one's tobacco supply is nonetheless seen as a loss. To call oneself *nguch* in that situation is to call for some relief from a frustration while at the same time recognizing that the drains on one's time and resources are legitimate" (Lutz 1985a:87).

All of these comments, and illustrations, suggest the following conceptual structure:

nguch

- (a) X thinks something like this:
- (b) this (Z) has been happening to me for a long time
- (c) because someone else (Y) wants it
- (d) I don't want it (Z) to happen any more
- (e) because of this, I would want to do something bad to Y
- (f) I shouldn't do it
- (g) I can't do anything
- (h) because of this, X feels something bad

The English expression *sick and tired* implies a component similar to (b), but not necessarily a reference to another person: because, unlike *nguch*, the feeling in question doesn't have to be caused by "noxious social obligations" (Lutz 1987:307). Components (d) and (h) of *nguch* are no doubt present here as well ('I don't want this to happen any more', 'because of this X feels something bad'). But unlike *nguch*, *sick and tired* doesn't convey a feeling of helplessness (component (g)) or of an obligation to put up with the situation (component (f)). It is often used to express 'rebellion', whereas *nguch* suggests a readiness to submit to a frustrating situation, rather than potential defiance.

sick and tired

- (a) X thinks something like this:
this (Z) has been happening for a long time
- (b) I don't want it (Z) to happen any more
- (c) because of this, X feels something bad

As this explication (similar to that proposed in Osmond 1990) suggests, the expression *sick and tired* doesn't necessarily have to refer to interpersonal relations, in the way *nguch* does: *nguch* is a reaction to other people's behaviour, but *sick and tired* doesn't have to be (although it is likely to be).

As for *boredom*, it has even less to do with social relations, being predominantly psychological in nature. Nonetheless, it does have components in common with *nguch*, apart from the obvious 'X feels something bad'. Like *nguch*, it implies that something has been going on for a long time, that one feels something bad because

of that, that one doesn't want it to continue, and that one would want to do something because of that. There is also a vague implication that one cannot do what one wants to do, though in this case one doesn't necessarily know what one would want to do. Unlike in the case of *nguch*, the main problem is that one's thoughts are not occupied with anything interesting (either because one is doing nothing or because one is doing something uninteresting).

As a first approximation, the following formula could be proposed for *boredom*:

boredom

- (a) X thinks something like this:
- (b) for some time, I haven't been doing anything that I would want to think about
- (c) I don't want this
- (d) I would want to do something that I would want to think about
- (e) I can't do anything like this now
- (f) because of this, X feels something bad

1.4.5 Waires

Lutz (1982, 1987) glosses *waires* as 'worry/conflict'. As an example of a characteristic situation associated with the feeling of *waires*, she mentions the case of a young woman who learned about the illness of her 'mother', living on a different island. The young woman wants to visit her mother, but she also wants to stay with her sister, who is in her ninth month of pregnancy. Hence a conflict of motivations and a feeling of *waires*.

According to Lutz (1987:303), "by asserting her *waires* she declared herself to simultaneously hold those two, now conflicting goals". The "program of action" associated with the feeling of *waires* can be formulated as follows: "Seek further information. Seek assistance in decision making".

These clues suggest the following conceptual structure:

waires

- X thinks something like this:
 - I want to do two things
 - I know that if I do one, I cannot do the other
 - if I don't do one, it will be bad
 - if I don't do the other, it will be bad
 - I don't know what I should do
 - because of this, X feels something bad

As this explication suggests, the concept of *waires* is close to the concept encapsulated in the English expression *to be in two minds*. The latter expression, however, is not the name of a feeling; moreover, it does not imply an unpleasant state of mind, as *waires* does. It appears that the English expression doesn't refer to any 'bad' consequences; it can be applied to a situation when the choice involves two 'good' possibilities:

X is in two minds

X thinks something like this:

I want to do two things

I know that if I do one, I cannot do the other

I don't know what I should do

Returning to *waires*, it is interesting to note that like most of the other Ifaluk concepts discussed here, it links the concept of 'feel' with the concepts of 'should', 'do', and 'bad' or 'good'. This is consistent with Lutz's (1985a:91) claim that in many non-Western cultures "emotions may be grouped with moral values" and that this may reflect a cultural orientation different from that reflected in "the middle-class Euro-American stance toward the value of a 'rich' (i.e. introspective) inner emotional life".

According to Lutz (1987:292) there are between ten and fifteen Ifaluk emotion terms "which can be heard in daily conversation" (and there are almost one hundred words in at least occasional use that represent these concepts). The five emotion terms analysed here belong to the former category, and thus they constitute between one third and one half of the basic emotional vocabulary used by the Ifaluks. They are indeed culture-specific, but they are not impenetrable to outsiders. When they are translated into the universal semantic metalanguage, the similarities and the differences between these concepts and their closest counterparts elsewhere in the world become apparent and their cultural significance can more easily be appreciated.

1.5 "Hawaii—the World of *Aloha*"

To anyone passing through Hawaii the concept of 'aloha' imposes itself as an intriguing riddle. One encounters the word everywhere, especially in the tourist industry. Ubiquitous signs welcome one "to the *Aloha* state". There are "*Aloha* buses" (sightseeing buses), "*Aloha* restaurants", shopping centres "Where *Aloha* comes alive", "*Aloha* Towers", "*Aloha* Stadiums", "*Aloha* Funway Rentals", "*Aloha* Airlines"; there is an "*Aloha* Flea Market"; and so on, ad infinitum. In fact, even before one goes to Hawaii, advertisements in travel agencies lure one with that key word: "Discover a different world . . . a world of private coves, native hearts filled with *aloha*, a world where the sun sets each evening just for you" (*Guide to Oahu*, February 5–11, 1988, which also lists the businesses mentioned).

What exactly is *aloha*, the bewildered tourist asks? "It seems to mean every damned thing", I have heard one tourist exclaim.

The anthropologist Francis Newton (1984:88) replies characteristically: "*Aloha* is a complex and profound sentiment. Such emotions defy definition. . . ." Some writers on the subject (for example, Ito 1985:308) gloss *aloha* as 'love', but others insist that *aloha* cannot be identified with love and suggest that it is a much more elusive and mysterious feeling. For example, Andrews (1974:51) describes *aloha* as "A word expressing different feelings; as love; affection; gratitude; kindness; pity; compassion; grief; the modern common salutation at meeting, at parting". In a

similar vein, Pukui and Elbert (1986:21) gloss *aloha* as “love, affection, compassion, mercy, sympathy, pity, kindness, sentiment, grace, charity; greeting; salutation, regards . . .”, and so on and so on. (Cf. also Akoka 1966.)

What descriptions of this kind make clear is, first, that the concept of ‘*aloha*’ is related to the concept of ‘*love*’; second, that *aloha* is not identical with *love*; and third, that *aloha* encapsulates a concept for which no word is available in English. I suggest that this concept can be spelt out as follows:

<i>aloha</i>
X feels something good toward Y
X wants Y to feel something good

Unlike *love* (“X loves Y”), *aloha* doesn’t imply personal acquaintance (although it is of course compatible with it), and it is readily extended to strangers. Consequently, the component ‘X knows Y’, which I have postulated for *love* (see Wierzbicka 1986c and the preceding section of this chapter), is not included in the explication of *aloha*.

Since *aloha*, unlike *love*, doesn’t imply any ‘special relationship’ between the experiencer and the target person, it implies no feeling of personal happiness caused by contact with the target person and no desire for such a contact. Unlike *love*, therefore, it doesn’t include the components ‘X wants to be with Y’ or ‘when X is with Y, X feels something good’.

Finally, *aloha* doesn’t imply any desire to do something good for the target person (although it is of course compatible with such a desire). It doesn’t warrant, therefore, the inclusion of the component ‘X wants to do something good for Y’, which has been postulated for *love*.

Generally speaking, therefore, *aloha* implies ‘good feelings’ toward other people and ‘good wishes’ for other people, without any implication of personal bond, commitment, or active concern. Its component ‘X wants Y to feel something good’ makes it very appropriate for use in greetings and leave-takings, but it differs from English good wishes by its emotional component (‘X feels something good toward Y’). If it is related to *love*, it is a very diluted kind of *love*; it is warmer, however, than mere good wishes, or mere friendliness.

The Hawaiians are quite right, therefore, when they insist that their *aloha* is something unique, something with no equivalent in English. It is certainly not *love*, but it is a word which implies a general attitude of ‘good feelings’ toward other people, combined with a kind of light-hearted good wishes (‘I want you to feel something good’). These good wishes focus not so much on good things that the speaker wants to happen to the other people as on good feelings that he or she would want other people to have. When advertising brochures alternate their titles between “Welcome to Paradise”, “Welcome to the World of Polynesia”, and “Welcome to the Aloha State”, they exploit, I think, the implication that the target person will ‘feel something good’ and that the Hawaiians want other people to ‘feel something good’. The invitation “discover a world of native hearts filled with *aloha*, a world where the sun sets each evening just for you!” promises no less than that—but probably no more.

Anticipating the following discussion of concepts related to *aloha* in other Polynesian languages (Tahitian, for example, Levy 1973; Samoan, cf. Gerber 1985; for a discussion of a similar concept in Marquesan, see Kirkpatrick 1973), I will note here that *aloha* differs from them considerably, in lacking their seriousness and their link with 'sadness' or 'compassion'. It is tempting to speculate that this difference may be the result of a change in the meaning of *aloha*, which in turn may be an effect of the americanisation of Hawaii over the last century. In support of this suggestion I would adduce the fact that the use of *aloha* in conventional formulae such as 'good morning', 'good-bye', or 'hello' (Pukui and Elbert 1986) is a recent phenomenon. Thus, Andrews (1974:51) writes of *aloha*: "Aloha, as a word of salutation, is modern; the ancient forms were *anoai*, *welina*, etc." He ends the list of English emotion terms which can be used as translation equivalents of *aloha* (love, affection, gratitude, pity, compassion, grief) with the most recent usage: "The modern common salutation at meeting and parting." This new use of *aloha* in greetings suggests a certain devaluation of the concept. It is more consistent with fairly superficial good wishes and with a kind of obligation-free optimistic friendliness (cf. "Have a nice day!") than with a meaning closer to love, empathy, or loving compassion.

Whether or not the meaning of *aloha* has been affected by the americanisation of Hawaii, it would appear that in modern use this term doesn't refer to misfortune in any way (unlike the Tahitian *arofa*, the Samoan *alofa*, the Ifaluk *fago*, the Utku Eskimo *naklik*, or the Russian *žalost'*). Compare, for example, the following comment (Gallimore and Howard 1968a:11): "When one's friends and kinsmen arrive, it is time to relax, to talk, to bring out for everyone's enjoyment what there is to share, and to promote as much as possible the feeling of *aloha*."

Accounts of this kind cannot always be trusted, because they sometimes focus on the anthropologist's idea of what "true" *aloha* (or any other emotion) is, instead of focussing on the empirical evidence as to how the term in question is used. For example, Newton (1984:88) says: "I witnessed true *aloha* most commonly within kin groups—especially within nuclear families—during moments of good fortune or crisis involving loved ones. With regard to the community as a whole I observed expressions of true *aloha* during major village crises." From Newton's observations, it seems clear that the Hawaiians themselves do not link *aloha* specifically with crises, but he chooses to dismiss this fact because it doesn't fit his notion of what "true *aloha*" is:

On a more ordinary, day-to-day basis there is a substantial amount of cooperation and good fellowship among the villagers—although such positive interactions did tend to be largely confined to circles of close kin and friends. . . . Such behavior is another form of *aloha* and it is commonly referred to by the villagers as '*aloha*'. However, this type of *aloha* in my opinion was not altruistic because such cooperation carried with it expectations of reciprocity. (1984:488)

This is in keeping with Newton's criticism of the dictionary definition of *aloha* quoted earlier, which describes it as "love, affection, compassion, mercy, pity, kindness and charity". Newton comments (1984:88): "what this definition lacks,

from my personal observations, is a sense of altruism in true expressions of *aloha*." But this distinction between *aloha* and "true *aloha*" only obscures the real meaning of the concept. The way Hawaiian villagers use the word *aloha* (as reported, for example, by Gallimore and Howard 1968a or Newton 1984) is not compatible with the claim that *aloha* (in its present use) implies something like compassion or pity. Whatever "true *aloha*" was one hundred years ago, the meaning of this concept appears to have changed. In fact, this change in the meaning of *aloha* seems to epitomise the broader cultural change which has affected Hawaii since its annexation by the United States.

1.6 The Tahitian Concept of *Arofa*

"*Arofa*, we do not really know what is its nature", says Manu, one of Levy's (1973:321) Tahitian informants. Levy himself (1973:342) glosses *arofa* as "empathy/pity/compassion". He writes: "*Arofa* in its broadest sense implies 'empathy', although it usually is used for 'empathic suffering because of the sufferings of others'. It implies caring about someone." Thus, Levy posits for *arofa* two components: something like suffering of the target person and something like empathy of the experiencer. He is very emphatic on both points: "One feels *arofa* for cripples, for hungry people, for people who have undergone calamities. It indicates 'pity'. But it also means that one feels the suffering of these people as they feel it; thus it indicates 'empathy'" (1973:342). "It implies caring for someone else" (1973:321).

The general 'tone' of *arofa*, therefore, is quite different from that of the Hawaiian *aloha*. When one is welcomed to the "*aloha* state", that is, to the "Polynesian paradise", one is not being welcomed to a state of pity or compassion. The 'good feelings' toward the target people are of course present in both cases, but the Tahitian *arofa* refers also to 'bad things' that happen to people. On the basis of Levy's discussion and examples, it can be explicated as follows:

arofa

- (a) X thinks something like this:
something bad happened/will happen to Y
- (b) if this happened to me, I would feel something bad
- (c) Y feels/will feel something bad
- (d) I don't want this
- (e) because of this, X feels something bad
- (f) because of this, X feels something good toward Y

The disjunctive components in this explication ('happened/will happen', 'feels/will feel') could be avoided if we assumed that future events ('will happen', 'will feel') are really involved in an anticipation of *arofa* rather than in the *arofa* itself; I suspect this is really the case, but this is a point which is not entirely clear in Levy's description.

Levy (1973:321) suggests that "*arofa* is a significant aspect of moral controls" and that (1974:294) "*arofa* also has an aspect of avoidance of mistake. By empathet-

ically knowing which aspects of action will hurt someone else, by accepting the clues of compassion and pity, one can then avoid behavior which would produce harm, punishment, and inchoate guilt feelings."

If we took this aspect of *arofa* as part of its semantic invariant, we should probably add to the proposed explication the following component: 'I don't want to do something bad' or 'I don't want to do something that would cause someone to feel something bad'. Some of Levy's examples would clearly support some such component. For example, Levy quotes the following comments by an informant:

If [I decided to] go and get money, I would go and get money . . . but I don't want to do such things because it is forbidden to me, I am prevented from doing them because of *arofa* . . . (*Arofa* for whom?) *Arofa* for the person to whom I have done a bad thing, and *arofa* toward myself. I am jumping into a hole. (Levy 1974:294; cf. also 1973:321)

Nonetheless, I have not included in the explication the hypothetical component in question ('I don't want to do something bad'), because it seems to me that it doesn't always apply to instances of *arofa*. One may be trying to "avoid making a mistake" when one refrains from stealing or from "trying to initiate a sexual relationship with the *vahine* [woman] of another villager" (Levy 1973:321), but when one feels *arofa* for people who are impaired, is one also trying to "avoid making a mistake"? Presumably not.

On the other hand, if we posit for *arofa* the component 'I don't want Y to feel something bad', this will account, it seems to me, for both kinds of situations (compassion for someone who is suffering and avoidance of an action which would lead to someone's suffering).

1.7 The Samoan Concept of *Alofa*

According to Gerber (1985:151), *alofa* is "the most culturally salient emotion" in Samoa. Gerber, reluctantly, glosses this term as 'love'. In fact, however, her discussion, and examples, make it quite clear that *alofa* means something different from *love*. Evidently, Gerber herself feels uncomfortable with her equation of *alofa* with *love*, and she comments that "the study of such functional equivalencies would be put on a firmer basis if it rested on a systematic framework of comparison" (1985:147).

I submit that a systematic framework is provided by the natural semantic metalinguage, based on universal semantic primitives. Within this framework, both the similarities and the differences between *alofo* and *love*, and also among *alofo*, *arofo*, and *aloha*, can be accurately portrayed. Although Gerber herself glosses *alofo* as 'love' (though with reservations), she reports that "bilingual Samoans . . . frequently say that three English words—*love*, *charity*, and *sympathy*—are needed to translate the word *alofo*" (1975:190). This is a very revealing statement. It suggests that the Samoan *alofo* is closer in meaning to the Tahitian *arofo* than to the English *love*. The following comment on *alofo*, attributed to a native informant,

confirms this: "If someone gets hurt, and he needs your help, he's lying on the ground, calling for help. Then you start to feel *alofa*, then you start to give him help" (Gerber 1975:190). Gerber (1975:190) comments: "When *alofo* is used to indicate giving any sort of aid to the unfortunate, the Samoan contention that they 'love all people' is quite literally true." But this is an illusion. In fact Samoans do not claim that they *love* all people; they only claim that they have *alofo* for all people, and the two concepts are clearly very different. If Samoans *alofo* all people, this means that *alofo* doesn't imply a 'special relationship', as *love* does.

Given this general nature of *alofo*, which implies no special personal bond, it is not at all surprising that it doesn't tend to express itself in kissing, hugging, and smiling, as *love* does.

Based on several informal interviews with Americans, one important connotation of the term 'love' is the physical demonstration of affection, embraces and smiles being particularly salient. . . . These associations never appear in Samoan descriptions of the term *alofo*. Smiling (a minor Samoan category) appears only in association with *fifia*, 'happiness'. Embraces, even between husbands and wives, are not mentioned as expressing *alofo*: sexual love is glossed by other terms, such as *mana'o* 'want' and *tu'inanau* 'desire' or 'eagerness'. (Gerber 1985:146)

The discussion so far suggests that the Samoan concept of *alofo* is very close to the Tahitian concepts of *arofa*. But Gerber insists that the two are not identical:

I have never had the impression that [*alofo*] was a particularly powerful feeling. This contrasts strongly with Levy's (1973:340–346) description of how the feeling *arofa* can overwhelm Tahitians. The connection with giving and helping is much more important, and appears to be universal in all descriptions of *alofo*. This is true in intimate relationships as well as more casual ones. The *alofo* between parents and children, between siblings, and even husbands and wives, is described in terms of giving and helping. The emphasis, even in these close relations, is on mutual obligation rather than intimacy. (1985:145)

This suggests that the element of empathy, present in *arofa*, is absent from *alofo* and that *alofo* implies a more active attitude ('I should do something good for this person; I want to do something good for this person'). The need for a reference to 'should' in the definition of *alofo* is supported by the gloss in Gerber's (1985:162) "glossary": "*alofo*—love, stresses social bonding and obligation".

Before I propose an explication for *alofo*, we should first clarify the relationship between *alofo* and misfortune or suffering. According to Gerber (1975:191), "when the term is used in connection with closer people, the general association of giving aid remains important, but the feeling is not necessarily connected with another person's misfortune". She also says about the Ifaluk concept of *fago* that "it is clearly a similar concept, but it is more definitely sad in tone than is *alofo*" (1985:145). "For a few informants, however, the connotation of *alofo* as a reaction to the misfortune of another remains strong even in the context of close relationships. For example, one informant said . . . : I think I feel *alofo* especially when people are sick or in trouble" (1975:191).

I think this ambivalence concerning the link between *alofa* and misfortune doesn't reflect any sociolectal or idiolectal variation but a somewhat different, less specific conceptual structure. Perhaps *arofo* is "sadder in tone" than *alofo* because it assumes a misfortune ('X thinks: something bad happened to Y'), whereas in the case of *alofo* the link with misfortune may be more hypothetical ('X thinks: bad things can happen to a person'). This applies both to a situation when a misfortune has actually occurred and to a situation when it is merely envisaged as a possibility. As for *fago*, its "sad" tone is perhaps accounted for by the component 'when X thinks that something bad can happen to Y, X feels something bad' (*alofo* doesn't seem to imply that the experiencer feels "something bad").

Gathering all these different clues together, I would propose the following explication:

alofo

- X thinks of person Y
- X thinks something like this:
bad things can happen to a person
if something bad happens to a person, I should do something good
for this person
- X feels something good toward Y
- X wants to do something good for Y

This is neither particularly 'sad' (as *fago* is) nor particularly 'intense' (as *arofo* is); yet it reflects that emphasis on 'giving and helping', with which, as Gerber (1985:151) assures us, informants primarily associate it.

1.8 Warm Feelings in an Igloo: Some Emotion Concepts of the Utku Eskimos

Emotion concepts of the Utku Eskimos have been studied, with remarkable care and discernment, by Jean Briggs (1970) in her book *Never in anger: portrait of an Eskimo family*. The analysis proposed here is based entirely on her data and observations.

Some of Briggs' emotion concepts seem familiar from other cultures, and these will not be analysed here. Others seem to have no parallels elsewhere in the world, as far as one can judge from studies available to date. The most persistent and striking image of the Utku Eskimos emerging from Briggs' study is that of people huddling together for warmth and affection, as if trying to find in that emotional closeness a protection against the cold outside, especially protection for their children.

1.8.1 Iva

One characteristic Utku term worth mentioning here is *iva*, which Briggs (1970:314) glosses as follows: 'to lie next to someone in bed ("under the same

covers”, p.319), with connotations of affectionate cuddling’. Strictly speaking, this is not an emotion term, as it focusses on a certain type of behaviour rather than a certain mental state, but it clearly has an important emotional dimension. The importance of this behaviour among the Utkus is illustrated in the following quote: “Small children are *ivad* (cuddled) by their parents and usually by most other close relatives as well, being carried from iglu to iglu or from tent to tent in the mornings, to be tucked into bed with aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. Sometimes when a child is displaced from its mother’s side by a younger brother or sister the father may continue to *iva* the child. . . . Often, however, some other older family member of the household: an older sibling, an uncle, or an aunt, may take over the role of cuddler. In some cases, it is said that the person who *ivas* a child as a substitute parent ‘adopts’ him, that is, the *iva* relationship itself constitutes a sort of ‘adoption’, developing into an especially close bond. . . .” (Briggs 1970:319).

But although the concept of *iva* clearly takes an adult-child relationship as its prototype, this relationship cannot be represented as a necessary condition, because “when husbands and wives lie together under one cover, as they usually do, this is also called *ivaing*” (Briggs 1970:320). As a first approximation, I propose the following explication:

iva (‘X *ivas* Y’)

if a person feels something good toward a small child, this person wants to lie
in bed with this child covered by the same thing
so that their bodies can touch
and so that they can be warm and feel something good
X feels like this toward Y
because of this, X does this with Y

1.8.2 Niviuj

A related concept is that of *niviuj*, which informants gloss as ‘to want to kiss’ but which according to Briggs “also seems to include the wish to touch or to be physically near someone”. The importance of the element of touch for this concept is highlighted by its humorous use in a situation when mosquitoes light on someone’s arms and the person laughs: “They feel *niviuj* toward me” (Briggs 1970:322).

The concept of *niviuj* contains, evidently, at least two concepts: ‘X wants to touch Y’ and ‘X feels something good toward Y’. Briggs’ data on the use of this word suggest, however, that this is not the whole story. First, there is a question of ‘littleness’ or ‘babyishness’ as a basis of *niviuj* feelings. Briggs writes:

Littleness seems to be a central characteristic of objects that are considered *niviuj-naqtuk*. In addition to babies, a great variety of small things, both live and inanimate, may produce *niviuj* feelings; newborn puppies (especially when there are no small children in the household), baby birds, a doll’s dress, even the inch-long slips of paper on which I recorded vocabulary—people used the term *niviuj* in connection with all these things. (1970:316)

But despite the reference to the small slips of paper I believe it is not ‘littleness’ which is the crucial factor here but the association with babies. Clearly, *niviug* is not restricted to babies, but it seems equally clear that babies provide the prototype for the feeling in question.

Second, there is also a question of ‘attractiveness’, ‘cuteness’, as a necessary dimension of *niviug*. A doll’s dress, or a new-born puppy, can remind one of babies not only because it is seen as ‘small’ but also because it is seen as ‘cute’, ‘nice to look at’. Briggs describes “*niviug* qualities” of things and creatures as their “kissable qualities” (1970:319). Other English adjectives which come to mind here are *lovable* and *adorable*. To account for all these aspects of *niviug*, I would propose, tentatively, an explication along the following lines:

niviug ('X *niviugs* Y')

X thinks something like this:

looking at Y one feels something good of the kind that one feels

looking at a baby

because of this, X wants to touch Y

because of this, X feels something good toward Y

1.8.3 Aqaq

A third Utku concept focussed on babies or small children is *aqaq*. Briggs (1970:314) glosses this word as ‘to communicate tenderly with another by speech or by gesture (other than touch)’, but she makes it clear that what is involved is above all “cooing” addressed at small children, which she describes as a highly patterned activity. Some forms of *aqaqing* are generally available, others are strictly dyadic, being restricted to individual adult-child relationships. For example, “Mannik. . . , when *aqaqing* Saarak, repeats one endearing phrase again and again: ‘*Niviuqnaqtuguuuuli* (you are kissable)’; the vowel is drawn out tenderly.” To account for both the content and form of “*aqaqing*” utterances, I would propose the following explication:

aqaq (X *aqaqs* Y)

X says things to Y

like one says things to babies

when one feels something good toward them

and when one wants them to know it

1.8.4 Unga

Briggs (1970:315) glosses *unga* as ‘the desire to be with a loved person’. “Being with” can be interpreted here as being very close indeed. For example, a little girl, Raigili, who “after her baby sister’s birth, refused to sleep by herself—next to her father, as before, but under separate quilts”, was said to feel *unga*. But the ‘togetherness’ in question doesn’t have to be interpreted quite as strictly. For example, when the boy Ukpik “decided to stay at home instead of returning to school”, he, too, was said to feel *unga*.

The concept of *unga* seems to imply three distinct elements: a desire to be with another person, a ‘good’ (love-like) feeling toward that person, and something like pleasure experienced in contact with that person. This last element is particularly clear in the following example: “Inuttiaq’s children were said to *unga* him, to want to be with him, because he was never annoyed (*urulu*) with them.”

The following explication can be proposed for the concept of *unga*:

unga ('X *ungas* Y')

X thinks something like this:

I want to be with Y

when I am with Y, I feel something good

X feels something good toward Y

1.8.5 Naklik

From a Western perspective, it might be said that *unga* and *naklik* represent two faces of love: its self-oriented and its other-oriented aspect. *unga* implies that one feels good in another person’s presence and that one wants to be with that person. By contrast, *naklik* implies that one wants to do good things for the other person. In the Utku view, “small children are thought to feel *unga*, to want to be with people they love, but they only gradually begin to love in a nurturant (*naklik*) way” (Briggs 1970:323). Briggs (1970:320) reports that when she asked people what *naklik* meant, she was always told “that it referred to the desire to feed someone who was hungry, warm someone who was cold, and protect someone who was in danger of physical injury”.

Her examples of *naklik* include both actual misfortunes and situations when no misfortunes have happened and apparently none is looming on the horizon. For example, Briggs (1970:321) reports that Pala said of his daughter, Akla, “She makes one feel *naklik*; she *ungas* me very much”, and she comments: “Here the *naklik* response seems to be a reaction to emotional rather than physical need.”

The active nature of *naklik* and also the fact that it can be translated as *pity* (1970:321) make this concept similar to the Tahitian *arofa* and to the Ifaluk *fago*. But *naklik* doesn’t seem to have the ‘sad tone’ of *arofa* or *fago*, and Briggs presents it as ‘protective’ rather than ‘compassionate’. In her examples, she mentions *naklik* for people who are hungry or for people who are cold, but not for people who are impaired physically. “*Naklik* feelings are given as reasons for taking care of the ill, for adopting orphans, and for marrying widows, all categories of people who are in need of physical assistance” (1970:321). Perhaps all these situations can be thought of as being ‘improvable’, as not being ‘beyond remedy’?

The wide range of situations where *naklik* is applicable means that we can posit for this concept none of the following components:

- (a) X thinks this: something bad happened to Y
- (b) X thinks this: something bad will happen to Y
- (c) X thinks this: something bad may happen to Y

We cannot posit (a) as part of the invariant because the misfortune may not yet have happened, and we cannot posit (b) or (c) as part of the invariant because the misfortune may have already happened. It appears, however, that what we *can* posit is the following component: 'X thinks; I don't want bad things to happen to Y'. This leads to the following explication:

naklik ('X *nakliks* Y')

- X thinks something like this: I don't want bad things to happen to Y
- X feels something good toward Y
- X wants to do something good for Y

1.9 "Poor Fellow My Country": Emotions in an Australian Desert

The phrase "poor fellow my country" is the title of a massive novel by an Australian writer, Xavier Herbert, who had a long and close involvement with Aboriginal people. The novel was published in 1975 and was dedicated "to my poor destructed country". The emotion expressed in the phrase "poor fellow" (which appears to be widely used by Aboriginal speakers of English in the Northern Territory, and which is found in the Kriol language as *bobala* (Jean Harkins p.c.)), is designated by different words in different Australian Aboriginal languages (possibly, with different shades of meaning). In the Western Desert language Pintupi the word in question is *kuunyi*. Myers (1976:131) glosses this word as 'compassion', 'concern' or 'feeling sorry for another', and he notes that it is usually rendered as 'poor bugger' in Pintupi English. Myers (1979:132) writes: "Another context of occurrence [of the word *kuunyi*] is related to mention of or thought of one's home country: 'poor fellow, my country' (*kuunyi, ngurra ngayuku*). The emphasis is on the sentiments of a feeling of relatedness towards the country."

Kuunyi is just one of a number of Pintupi emotion terms which have no exact equivalents in English and which are, or can be, used to express warm feelings to people and places in ways which have no parallels in English. Unlike *kuunyi* itself, some of these words appear to refer inherently to one's homeland or to one's kinsfolk.

The psychiatrist Rodney Morice (1978:87), who worked among the Pintupi in Central Australia, found that "in a transcultural setting, psychiatric diagnosis is often impeded by language and cultural barriers. . . . When language and cultural barriers intervene, the expression and interpretation of symptoms can become exceedingly difficult, and mental state examination even more so". The main difficulty, according to Morice, consists in understanding what the patients feel: that is, in translating the patients' words describing their symptoms into terms intelligible to him:

The most stable set of cognitions available to a person is contained in his language and its lexical categories. By examining these in a particular Aboriginal speech community it has been possible to predict the most likely responses of its members to the effects of anxiety and depression. For example, many Pintupi words for sadness and depression imply that the sufferer is 'worrying' for his land or his

relatives, concepts understandable in the light of Aborigines' strong attachment to their country of birth, and of the complex kinship system. Most Pintupi when experiencing a depressed affect can therefore be expected to interpret this as resulting from separation from their land or relatives, and a behavioral response to this may be the sudden embarkation on a journey or 'walkabout'. (1978:94)

Other writers on the subject, too, emphasise the extraordinary importance of the Aboriginal "spiritual kinship with the land" (Myers 1979:350; cf. also Berndt and Berndt 1968), "the special identification of persons with 'place' in Aboriginal thought" (Myers 1979:350), and "a sense of belonging together, or shared identity", with one's kin (Myers 1979:350). Myers (1979:350) refers in this connection to Munn (1970:158), who "has tried to show that among Central Australian Aborigines, important external objects—parts of the material world like the 'country'—come to provide the individual with images or 'fragments' of himself".

The fact that the Pintupi language has "many words for sadness and depression" which imply "that the sufferer is 'worrying' for his land or his relatives" does support, indeed, the general conviction of all observers that the Pintupi are strongly attached to their country and to their kin, that they somehow identify with them, and that this attachment constitutes an important part of their culture. But this fact suggests also that the words in question are not really words "for sadness, depression or worry". They are really words for something else—all of them being somehow different in meaning from each other, as well as from the English words *sadness*, *depression*, and *worry*.

What, then, is the meaning of these words? Morice (1977a:105) offers the following glosses (quoted verbatim):

watjilpa: preoccupation with thoughts of country and relatives. To become sick through worrying about them. Other people may try to assuage worry, or traditional doctor may treat.

wurrkulini: excessive concern for, and worry about, land or relatives, as for *watjilpa*.

yiluruyiluru: dejection caused by worrying too much for absent relatives, for example if they are in hospital.

yirraru: as for *watjilpa*.

yulatjarra: sympathy or sorrow for sick or deceased relatives. If a death has occurred this state is accompanied by self-inflicted wounds—"sorry cuts". Not treated by traditional doctor.

In a later article, Morice (1977b:24) adds one more Pintupi emotion concept focussed on attachment to relatives, *nantungu*, which he defines as follows:

nantungu: to become stiff or paralysed from too much worry, from thinking too much about relatives who have been dead for a long time.

But glosses of this kind, useful as they are, cannot be taken as adequate definitions. To begin with, *yirraru* hasn't received any definition at all, except for the

unconvincing comment that it is like *watjilpa*, and *yiluruyiluru* hasn't really been differentiated from *watjilpa* either. Clearly the other glosses are also not intended to be taken literally. For example, *yulatjarra* can hardly mean "sympathy for deceased relatives" (if they are dead, they are no longer a suitable target for *sympathy*). In the other glosses, too, words such as *preoccupation*, *worry*, *concern*, *sympathy*, *sorrow*, or *dejection* appear to be used almost at random, indiscriminately. This negligent attitude to the choice of English emotion words tallies well with the author's (admitted, and well-justified) lack of faith in such matching procedures.

In any case, what such half-hearted matching achieves is an ethnocentric look at the Pintupi emotion concepts through the prism of the English emotion concepts, not an understanding of the Pintupi conceptualisation in its own right. As a result, the relations among the different Pintupi emotion words discussed remain obscure, as do the relations between the Pintupi and the English emotion terms.

The data provided by Morice are not sufficient for well-justified explications of the relevant Pintupi concepts to be posited confidently (and there appear to be some inconsistencies between Morice's data and Myers' (1976 and 1979) data). Consequently, the explications to be proposed have to be regarded as no more than first approximations.

I will start with the concept of *watjilpa*, which Myers (1979:361) glosses as 'homesick', 'pining', 'lonely', 'worry', or 'melancholy', and which he describes as follows: "The core of the concept refers to *separation* [Myers' emphasis] from objects or persons of security and familiarity—family and home—places and people among which and whom one grew up and where one feels safe and comfortable. . . . Time and again in the life histories collected, Pintupi talked of their travels and the 'homesickness' (*watjilpa*) that made them come back to their home country. One friend (who had not seen his country for a long time) explained to me, 'I close my eyes and I can see that place. It's very green. There's a rockhole and a hill where I used to play. My brother pushed me down—it makes me "homesick".'"

watjilpa

X thinks something like this (of a place):

- I am like a part of this place
- I am not in this place now
- I want to be in this place
- I can't be in this place now
- because of this, something bad can happen to me
- because of this, X cannot think of other things

wurrkuliu

X thinks of place Y

X feels something good toward the people in this place

X thinks something like this:

- something bad could happen to people in this place
- these people are like a part of me
- because of this, X feels something bad

yulatjarra

X thinks of person Y
 X feels something good toward Y
 X thinks something like this:
 something bad happened to Y
 Y is like a part of me
 because of this, X feels something bad
 X doesn't want not to feel this

yiluruyiluru

X thinks of person Y
 X feels something good toward Y
 X thinks something like this:
 I am not with Y
 something bad is happening to Y
 Y is like a part of me
 because of this, X feels something bad

nantungu

X thinks of people Y
 X feels something good toward Y
 X thinks something like this:
 people Y are dead now
 this is bad
 these people are like a part of me
 because of this, X feels something bad
 because of this, X cannot think of other things
 because of this, X cannot feel anything good
 because of this, something bad happens to X's body

I conclude that Morice's lexical data do support his claim that Aboriginal people have very close ties with their land and with their relatives; they do not, however, give any support to his ethnocentric conclusions (1977a:92) that "as with anxiety, depression is an affect inherent to the human condition and psyche"; that "to assume its absence from groups of preliterate people would therefore seem, on theoretical grounds, to be untenable" or that "in practice, it has been observed to occur, and the degree of differentiation in the Pintupi lexicon of grief and depression would seem to suggest that it is a not uncommon experience".

What seems to have been observed among the Pintupi is not the occurrence of *anxiety*, *depression*, or *grief* but the occurrence of *watjilpa*, *yulatjarra*, or *yiluruyiluru*, and the existence of lexical categories such as these does not support the view that *anxiety* or *depression* is a universal human concept "inherent to the human condition and psyche", just as the existence of lexical categories such as *anxiety* and *depression* in English doesn't support the view that *watjilpa* or *yulatjarra* are universal human concepts, inherent in the human condition and psyche. (Cf. Lutz 1985a; Kleinman and Good 1985.)

1.10 The Czech Concept of *Litost* and the Russian Concept of *Žalost'*

The Czech writer Milan Kundera devoted to the concept of *litost* a brilliant mini-study entitled “What is *litost*?”, the core of which I am going to quote in extenso:

Litost is a Czech word with no exact translation into any other language. It designates a feeling as infinite as an open accordion, a feeling that is the synthesis of many others: grief, sympathy, remorse, and an indefinable longing. The first syllable, which is long and stressed, sounds like the wail of an abandoned dog.

Under certain circumstances, however, it can have a very narrow meaning, a meaning as definite, precise, and sharp as a well-honed cutting edge. I have never found an equivalent in other languages for this sense of the word either, though I do not see how anyone can understand the human soul without it.

Let me give an example. One day the student went swimming with his girlfriend. She was a top-notch athlete; he could barely keep afloat. He had trouble holding his breath underwater, and was forced to thrash his way forward, jerking his head back and forth above the surface. The girl was crazy about him and tactfully kept to his speed. But as their swim was coming to an end, she felt the need to give her sporting instincts free rein, and sprinted to the other shore. The student tried to pick up his tempo too, but swallowed many mouthfuls of water. He felt humiliated, exposed for the weakling he was; he felt the resentment, the special sorrow which can only be called *litost*. He recalled his sickly childhood—no physical exercise, no friends, nothing but Mama’s ever-watching eye—and sank into utter, all-encompassing despair. On their way back to the city they took a shortcut through the fields. He did not say a word. He was wounded, crestfallen; he felt an irresistible desire to beat her. ‘What’s wrong with you?’ she asked him, and he went into a tirade about how the undertow on the other side of the river was very dangerous and he had told her not to swim over there and she could have drowned—then he slapped her face. The girl burst out crying, and when he saw the tears running down her face, he took pity on her and put his arms around her, and his *litost* melted into thin air.

Or take an instance from the student’s childhood: the violin lessons that were forced on him. He was not particularly gifted, and his teacher would stop him and point out his mistakes in a cold, unbearable voice. It humiliated him, he felt like crying. But instead of trying to play in tune and make fewer mistakes, he would make mistakes on purpose. As the teacher’s voice became more and more unbearable, enraged, he would sink deeper and deeper into his bitterness, his *litost*.

Well then, what is *litost*?

Litost is a state of torment caused by a sudden insight into one’s own miserable self. (1980:121)

From further comments (Kundera 1980:122), however, it would appear that *litost* is in fact a little more than that feeling of torment “caused by a sudden insight into one’s own miserable self”, because “*Litost* works like a two-stroke motor. First comes a feeling of torment, then the desire for revenge. The goal of revenge is to make one’s partner as miserable as oneself”. I suggest that (if Kundera is correct) the whole conceptual ‘script’ for *litost* can be spelt out as follows:

litost

X thinks something like this:

something bad is happening to me
I can't do something
this other person (Y) can do it
because of this, Y can think something bad about me
because of this, X feels something bad
because of this, X wants Y to feel something bad

It is fascinating to consider the differences, and the similarities, between this concept and the related Polish concept encapsulated in the word *litość* (obviously a cognate of *litost*). *Litość* can be roughly glossed as ‘pity’, and the relationship between *litość* and *litost* can be likened to that between pity and self-pity.

litość (pity)

X thinks something like this:

something bad is happening to person Y
something like this is not happening to other people
because of this, X feels something bad

Unlike *compassion*, *litość* (or *pity*) does not imply that the target person feels anything bad (for example, one could pity a child whose parents have been killed even if the child doesn't know this yet).

Another Polish word cognate to *litost* and semantically related to it is *politowanie*, a kind of patronising and smug pity, which can be portrayed as follows:

politowanie

X thinks something like this:

this other person (Y) cannot do things well
this is bad for Y
I am not like this
because of this, X feels something

But *litost* is not simply self-pity: it is a kind of self-pity born of humiliation, and Kundera is, of course, quite right in stressing its uniqueness and ‘untranslatability’. It can be ‘translated’, however, at the level of semantic explications.

It is tempting to link the emergence of the unique concept of *litost* with the sad history of the Czech nation—defeated, humiliated, and for three hundred years deprived of its independence and its national dignity. To substantiate this suggestion, however, we would need to know more about the semantic history of the word *litost*. I will not pursue this question here.

It is interesting to note that if the closely related language, Polish, doesn't have a word for *litost*, Russian doesn't have a word for either *litost* or *litość* (*pity*). Dictionaries usually equate both the Polish *litość* and the English *pity* with the Russian word *žalost'*, but this is inaccurate and misleading. When the Russian religious philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev (1966, v.7:57) calls *žalost'* “the root of an ethical

attitude towards . . . other human beings and towards living creatures in general”, he doesn’t mean *pity*. He means something that constitutes, roughly speaking, a kind of cross between *pity* and *love*. It can be spelt out as follows (for another analysis of *žalost'*, along rather similar lines, see Zaliznjak 1988):

žalost'

X thinks something like this:

something bad is happening to Y

because of this, Y feels something bad

I would want it didn't happen [i.e., I wish it hadn't happened]

because of this, X feels something good toward Y

if X could, X would want to do something good for Y

Žalost' differs from *pity*, and from the Polish *litość*, in the presence of ‘loving’ feelings toward the unfortunate target person (‘X feels something good toward Y’) and in its absence of potentially invidious comparisons with other people: the target person is not thought of as being any ‘worse off’ than other people. Unlike *pity*, *žalost'* is, potentially, a feeling that can embrace all living creatures, just as *love* can. Solov'ev (1966, v.5:421) points out that Russian peasant women simply merge *žalost'* and *ljubov'* ‘love’ (using the verb *žalet'* instead of *ljubit'*), and he himself often brings the two concepts together, as if they were almost identical (for example, 1966, v.5:422). He also claims (1966, v.8:960) that “*žalost'* est dobro; čelovek projavljajuščij èto čuvstvo nazyvaetsja dobrym” (*žalost'* is goodness; a man who shows *žalost'* is called a good man’). All this sets *žalost'* apart from *pity*, and from *litość*.

Žalost' is morphologically related to *žal'* (roughly, ‘regret’), and both are closely linked with the verb *žalet'*, whose transitive use corresponds to *žalost'*, and its intransitive use, to *žal'*. This semantic link between *žalost'* and *žal'* is accounted for in the component ‘I would want it didn’t happen’. The difference between *žalost'* and the closest Russian counterpart of *compassion* (*sočuvstvie*, lit., ‘co-feeling’) is highlighted in the following passage from Solzhenitsyn’s novel *Cancer Ward*:

Kostoglotov smotrel na nego ne s *žalost'ju*, net, a—s soldatskim *sočuvstviem*: èta pulja tvoja okazalaś', a sledujuščaja, možet, moja. (1968a:231)

Kostoglotov regarded him not with pity, but with a soldier’s sympathy: ‘This bullet was yours; the next may be mine.’ (1968b:243)

But the word *sympathy*, used in the English translation quoted, is not a good rendering of the Russian *sočuvstvie*, and it doesn’t really help to elucidate Solzhenitsyn’s distinction between *sočuvstvie* and *žalost'*. In fact, *sočuvstvie* is closer to the English *compassion*, discussed earlier; like *compassion*, it implies that the experiencer puts himself mentally in the place of the suffering person and imagines his own feelings (‘if this happened to me, I would feel something bad’), and it doesn’t imply an impulse to do something. *Žalost'* is more altruistic, so to speak, and more likely to “activate”—rather like the Ifaluk *fago*, though its close link with *žal'* ‘regret’ highlights the experiencer’s feeling of helplessness and impotence (‘X

would want to do something good for Y' in *žalost'* versus 'X wants to do something good for Y' in *fago*).

The importance of the concept *žalost'* in Russian culture was well perceived in Geoffrey Gorer's studies of the "Russian psychology" and of the Russian "national character". For example, Gorer (1949a:165), observes that of all "the tender emotions which Russians express . . . the most dramatic is love, but far and away more widespread is that which the Russians call *žalost'*, and which is inadequately translated as 'pity'. There is no single English word to carry all the connotations: it means a sympathetic understanding of and feeling for the moral and spiritual anguish which other people are undergoing. In contrast to pity, it is perhaps even more desirable to receive *žalost'* from another than to offer it. It can be, and often is, felt for all undergoing moral and spiritual anguish, whether personally known or not."

Gorer rightly points out (1949b:183) that the Russian concept of *žalost'* is epitomised in Aleksandr Blok's poem which begins as follows:

Devuška pela v čerkovnom xore
O vsex ustalyx v čužom kraju,
O vsex korabljax, ušedšix v more,
O vsex, zabyvšix radost' svoju.

'A girl was singing in the church choir
Of all the tired in foreign lands,
Of all the ships that went to sea,
Of all who lost their joy. . . .'

The great significance of the concept of *žalost'* in Russian culture is also confirmed by statistical data. Thus, in Zasorina's (1977) megacorpus of one million running words, the noun *žalost'*, the verb *žalet'*, and the adverbial *žalko* have a joined frequency of 218, whereas in Kučera and Francis' (1967) data for American English *pity* has a frequency of merely 14. It is true that in Russian *žalet'* and *žalko* can also stand for *regret*, but the Russian noun for *regret*—*žal'*—has also a high frequency of 74, whereas the English word *regret* (whether noun or verb) has a frequency of only 23. This means that in Russian the combined frequencies of *žalet'*, *žalost'*, *žalko*, and *žal'* are 294, whereas in English the combined frequencies of *pity* and *regret* are only 39. These are, I think, spectacular differences.¹ (For further discussion of *žalost'*, see chapter 7, section 2.2.5.)

1.11 The 'Broad Russian Nature' and the Russian Concept of *Toska*

Toska is one of the key words in Russian culture. More than that, it is a word that can be seen as a key to the 'Russian soul'. In fact the two words *toska* and *duša* ('soul') often come together in Russian speech, as if one concept evoked the other, and as if they had something in common. For example, Tsvetaeva (1969:131) wrote this about her ten-year-old son, Mur:

Menee vsego razvit—duševno: ne znaet *toski*,sovsem ne ponimaet. Lob—serdce—i potom uže—duša: 'normal'naja' duša desyatiletnego rebenka, t.e.—začatok. (K

serdu—otnošu ljubov' k roditel'jam, žalost' k životnym, vse elementarnoe—k duše—vse bespričinnoe bolevoe.) (1969:131)

He is least advanced emotionally [lit. soul-wise]: he doesn't know what *longing* [*toska*] is, doesn't understand it in the least. The forehead—the heart—and only then—the soul: the ‘normal’ soul of a ten-year-old child, i.e. its embryo. (To the heart I relate love for parents, pity for animals, all that is elementary.—To the soul I relate all that is painful without seeming cause.) (Translation from Proffer 1980:99)

Before we explore these somewhat mysterious links among ‘longing’, ‘soul’, and ‘inexplicable pain’, it should be pointed out that unlike words such as *longing* and *soul* in English, *toska* is a common everyday word in Russian. In fact, Russians seem to refer to their *toska* more often than speakers of English refer to any emotion whatsoever. This impression is confirmed by the data from the available ‘megacorpora’ of English and Russian speech. Thus, in Kučera and Francis’ (1967) corpus of one million words of running text, the closest equivalents of *toska* show the following frequencies:

melancholy	9
yearning	14
longing	12
boredom	11

The corresponding frequency for *toska* (Zasorina 1977) is 53, and if we also include the verb *toskovat'*, then it is 69. It might be objected that since *melancholy*, *longing*, and *yearning* are not common everyday words in English, one should rather compare *toska* with common English words such as *sadness* and *sad*. The frequency of *sadness* (including *sad* and *sadly*) is indeed much higher (55), but *sadness* does have its close counterpart in Russian, in fact two such counterparts, *grust'* and *pečal'*, whose frequency is also very high, in fact much higher than that of *sadness*: for *grust'* (including the adjective *grustnyj*, the adverb *grustno*, and the verb *grustit'*) the figure is 99, and for *pečal'* (including the adjective *pečal'nyj*, the adverb *pečal'no*, and the verb *pečalit'sja*) the frequency is 102.

It cannot be said, therefore, that *toska* is the Russian cultural equivalent of the English *sadness*. *Sadness* has its closest equivalents in *grust'* and *pečal'*, and *toska* is something special, something peculiarly Russian. So what exactly is it?

Consider the following passage from a poem (Tsvetaeva’s “Serežé”, ‘To Sereža’):

Po tebe vнизу *toskuet* mama,
V nej duša grustnej pustogo xrama,
Grusten mir. K sebe ee zovi. (1980, v.1:6)

‘Your mother longs for you below
Her soul sadder than an empty shrine
Her whole world sad. Call her to yourself.’

I believe these three lines (of an invocation to a dead boy) offer a good introduction to the concept of *toska*, as they highlight several important aspects at the same time:

the link of with *grust* 'sadness', the implication of emptiness caused by the absence of someone or something of great value (the empty temple image); the intensity and pervasiveness of the feeling, which seems to throw a shadow on the whole world ("the world is sad"); the implication of yearning, of wanting to be elsewhere; the idea of a call coming to us from 'beyond', from another world, the contrast between the world of here and now, which has lost its appeal to us, and another, inaccessible world, which contains a lost treasure. All these elements are relevant to the concept of *toska* and have to be accounted for in its explication.

Can they all be accounted for in one explication? In dealing with complex and difficult concepts such as *toska*, there is a natural temptation to treat them as polysemous and to link different aspects of their meaning with different senses of the word. Not surprisingly, bilingual dictionaries of Russian usually succumb to this temptation in the case of *toska*. For example, Smirnickij (1961) assigns to *toska* two different meanings—(1) melancholy, depression, yearning, anguish, agony; (2) ennui, weariness, tedium—whereas Wheeler (1972) attributes to it three different meanings: (1) melancholy, anguish, pangs; (2) depression, ennui, boredom; (3) longing, yearning; nostalgia; *po rodine* ('after homeland')—homesickness.

But in fact there is little justification for assigning two, three, or more different meanings to *toska*. The nature of *toska* is such that elements of something similar to melancholy, something similar to boredom, and something similar to yearning are blended together and are all present at the same time, even though different contexts may highlight different components of this complex but unitary concept.

One could of course try to separate different senses of *toska* on the basis of their syntactic properties: distinguishing *toska* without any complements from *toska* used with one prepositional phrase (*toska po N*) and again from *toska* with another prepositional phrase (*toska o N*). But although there is no doubt some merit in considering these three syntactic contexts separately, the fact of the matter is that in each case we discover the same blend of something like melancholy or sadness, of something like boredom, and of something like yearning or nostalgia. The prepositional phrases '*po N*' and '*o N*' add something to the bare *toska*, but despite the appearances, a common core remains. In particular, it is not the case that *toska* with a prepositional phrase implies an identifiable cause or target and a bare *toska*, an inexplicable feeling with no specific target. A bare *toska* is quite compatible with a specific target, as in the following sentence about an orphan boy's anguish:

'Mamočka,'—v dušerazdirajuščej toske zval on ee s neba, kak novopričtenuju ugodnicu. . . (Pasternak 1959:19)

'Mama!'—in his heartrending anguish he called her down from heaven like a newly canonised saint. . . (Pasternak 1958:21)

The orphan boy's *toska* (*without* a prepositional phrase) is not different in kind from the *toska* of the mother of a dead boy mentioned earlier (*with* a prepositional phrase). The point is that whether or not a specific target of *toska* is mentioned, something inexplicable and indefinite is always implied in this word. *Toska* implies the absence and the inaccessibility of something good; a thought of a loved person who has died may provide a crystallising point for this feeling, but the feeling goes far beyond any such point.

Similarly, in the following sentence:

S toskoj i blagodarnost'ju vspominala naši gimnazii so 'svoimi slovami' ('Rasskaži svoimi slovami'). (Tsvetaeva 1969:44)

'I recalled with nostalgia and gratitude our high schools, with their "in your own words" ("Tell it in your own words").'

the *toska* is focussed on the old schools, with their traditional teaching methods, but it goes far beyond that, hinting at old values and a bygone world, and perhaps at the loss of childhood.

Toska is always indefinite, even if it does have a specific crystallising point, because it always hints at an unappeasable heartache, at an insatiate longing which seems to reach out beyond the boundaries of 'this world', of the accessible reality. This is why, I think, *toska* can so easily develop both positive connotations (poetic and metaphysical) and negative ones (connotations of despair and hopelessness), as in the following two contrasting quotes:

U mamy—muzyka, stixi, toska, u papy—nauka. (Tsvetaeva 1972:29)

'Mother had her music, her poetry, her *toska*; father had his scholarship.'

Takoj toski Saša ne ispytyval ni v Butyrke, ni na peresylke, ni na ètape. V Butyrke byla nadežda—razberutsja, vypustjat, na ètape byla cel'—dojti do mesta, obosnovat'sja. . . Zdes' net ni nadeždy ni celi. (Rybakov 1987, pt.3:54)

'Saša had never experienced such anguish (*toska*) before, not at any of the camps or staging posts along the way into exile. In Butyrka there was still the hope that they would discover their mistake and release him. Along the way there was the goal of reaching the next point, getting settled. . . Here there was no hope, no goal.'

Trying to account for all these different and seemingly contradictory aspects of *toska*, I propose the following explication of this protean concept:

toska

X thinks something like this:

- I want something good to happen
- I don't know what
- I know: it cannot happen
- because of this, X feels something

The fact that the person who experiences *toska* wants something good, vague, and inaccessible accounts for the link between *toska* and *yearning*. The fact that the experiencer knows that the desired state of affairs cannot come true accounts for the links between *toska* and concepts such as *melancholy* and *sadness*. The fact that people in the grip of *toska* can see no attainable goals, that there is nothing else that they think they want to do and can do, accounts for the links between *toska* and concepts such as *boredom* and *ennui*. Finally, the implicit contrasts between the things of here and now, that could happen, and good things to which one aspires and

which could not happen (as if they belonged to another, better, world) accounts for the intuitively felt link between *toska* and *duša* ('soul'); see chapter 1.

As Andrzej Bogusławski (p.c.) has pointed out to me, Sukalenko (1976:144) quotes the following definition of *toska* by the Gorky scholar Pocepnja: 'čuvstvo mučitel'noj, nevynosimoj neudovletvorennosti, tomjaščego dušu protesta', 'a feeling of tormenting, unbearable "unsatisfiedness", of a protest nagging at the soul'. Pocepnja noted that this meaning is not stated in the general dictionaries of the Russian language; Sukalenko retorts that such an interpretation of *toska* is idiosyncratic and should *not* be noted in general Russian dictionaries. In fact, however, Pocepnja's definition captures remarkably well the invariant core of *toska*, missed in the conventional definitions, which treat the word as polysemous.

One might say that the essence of *toska* is expressed in the following poem by Zinaida Gippius (translated by Jarintzov 1916:190):

Ja umiraju,
Stremljus' k tomu, čego ja ne znaju,
Ne znaju . . .
I èto želanie ne znaju otkuda
Prišlo otkuda,
No serdce xočet i prosit čuda,
Čuda!
O, pust' budet to, čego ne byvaet,
Nikogda ne byvaet,
Mne blednoe nebo čudes obeščaet,
Ono obeščaet,
No plaču bez slez o nevernom obete,
O nevernom obete . . .
Mne nužno to, čego net na svete,
Čego net na svete.

'Alas, I'm dying with sadness that's gnawing me,
Gnawing me,
Longing for things unknown to me,
Unknown to me.
Where has it come from? I cannot grasp it . . .
Cannot grasp it.
I am drawn by things which have not passed yet,
Not passed yet.
My heart is praying for miracles,
Miracles,
High above earthly pinnacles,
Pinnacles! . . .'

The last two lines mean, literally, 'I feel I need that which doesn't exist in the world'.

One final question imposes itself at this point: why are the Russians so prone to *toska*? And why does this concept play such a significant role in Russian culture?

We could of course say that once a key concept such as *toska* has been explicated, the linguist's job is done and that the rest should be left to cultural historians,

social psychologists, anthropologists, and other scholars. I do not wish to indulge in speculations, and I do prefer to keep close to the area of my professional competence. But perhaps I could be allowed to point to some views of experts in Russian history, in Russian thought, and in the Russian ‘soul’, which seem to be particularly relevant in the present context. Thus, the Russian philosopher Berdyaev has this to say about “the Russian national type”:

There is that in the Russian soul which corresponds to the immensity, the vagueness, the infinitude of the Russian land, spiritual geography corresponds with physical. In the Russian soul there is a sort of immensity, a vagueness, a predilection for the infinite, such as is suggested by the great plains of Russia. (1947:2)

The Russian poet Esenin in his poetical portrait of Russia explicitly linked the concept of *toska* with this feature of Russian geography:

I *toska* beskonečnyx ravnin . . . (Esenin 1933:284)

‘And the *toska* of the endless plains . . .’

Thinking along similar lines, another expert in Russian culture, Fedotov (1981:92), sees the key to the Russian soul in “that aspect of Russian nature which is called its ‘broadness’—its unrestrainedness, . . . its organic dislike for any finiteness of form”; he describes the vague Russian yearnings as characterised by two contrasting features—“*mračnost'* and *detskost'*”, ‘childlikeness and gloom’. The Russian gaiety, he says, “is transient, unrestrained joy cannot satisfy a Russian for a long time. It always ends seriously, tragically”. Fedotov mentions in this connection, as probably relevant, “the Tartar blood and the Moscovite oppression”. Furthermore, Fedotov (like many other commentators) describes the “Russian national type” as that of “an eternal seeker” (1981:86), and he characterises the Russian religious orientation as “an eschatological type of Christianity, having no earthly ‘home’ but yearning for a heavenly one”.

Berdyaev echoes this, describing as “an extraordinary property of the Russian people” “a capacity for the endurance of suffering and a mind directed ardently towards the other world” (1947:14), and saying (1947:253): “The Russian Idea is eschatological, it is oriented to the end; it is this which accounts for Russian maximalism”.

It seems to me that comments of this kind fit in very well with the emergence of the unique concept of *toska* in Russian language and with the salience of this concept in Russian culture.

2. Conclusion

Can a feeling such as, for example, anger be a universal human emotion? Solomon (1984:242) observes, “Anger is an emotion that would seem to be universal and unlearned if any emotion is, however different its manifestations in various cultures”. Most scholars involved in the controversy about the universality of emotions

would probably agree with this judgement (whether they accept or reject the universality thesis). It is therefore convenient to use anger as a focal example. Solomon himself stresses the “if”, and he doesn’t forget this “if” in the subsequent discussion. He doesn’t deny the possibility “that some emotions may be specific to *all* cultures”, but he insists that “this should remain an open question for cross-cultural inquiry, not an a priori supposition” (1987:249–50). Personally, he is sceptical: “one might find anger (or some similar emotion) in every society, but the evidence seems to suggest that this is not the case”. Many other scholars, however, have asserted (or assumed) the universality of anger without the slightest hesitation; for example, Izard (1977:64) declared flatly, “in the human being the expression of anger and the experiential phenomenon of anger are innate, pan-cultural, universal phenomena”.

Some other writers on the subject have been attracted to a compromise solution suggested by the prototype theory of semantics. Rosch herself (1975:196) seemed quite happy to accept Ekman’s (1974) “six basic emotions”—happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust—as universal prototypes. Rosch wrote: “In domains in which prototypes are biologically ‘given’, categories can be expected to form around the salient prototypes and, thus, to have elements of content as well as principles of formation which are universal.”

Gerber (1985:143) is inclined to accept this idea: “It seems possible . . . that basic affects serve as prototypes for the development of a series of more culturally specific categories.” In her “conclusion”, she is even more definite (1985:159): “In this analysis, I have assumed the existence of inborn patterns of affective arousal. . . . Basic affects pattern the conceptual system of emotion, and serve as centers around which clusters of meaning develop. This is similar to the ‘natural prototype’ structures suggested by Rosch (1975). . . . Because these basic affects are panhuman, they will provide a basis for comparison and translation between systems of emotion in different societies.” (Here Gerber speaks as if the pan-human character of the “basic affects” in question had already been established.)

Levy (1984) is similarly inclined to apply the prototype theory to emotions, although his phrasing is much more cautious than Gerber’s. Referring to Berlin and Kay’s (1969) work on colour categories, Levy (1984:229) writes: “Tahitian and Newar data suggest that in some similar fashion the central tendencies named by various emotional terms are probably universal but that the borders of the categories may differ. . . . That is, whatever the cultural peculiarities in the relations and associated meanings of Tahitian emotional terms, I had little trouble in recognizing, say, *ri’ari’ia* as ‘fear’, *riri* as ‘anger’, *hina’aro* as ‘desire’, *’oa’oa* as ‘happiness’, *ha’ama* as ‘shame’. That is, if an emotion was recognized and named at all, its ‘central tendency’ seemed to be universally human.”

The data discussed in this book, however, do not support Levy’s or Gerber’s position. Even if the Tahitian word *riri* or the Samoan word *ita* can be recognised as meaning, “essentially”, the same as *anger*, Rosaldo’s and Lutz’ data show that the Ilongot word *liget* and the Ifaluk word *song* do not mean “essentially” the same as *anger*. It is not just the boundaries that are different: the prototype itself is different. The explications phrased in the natural semantic metalanguage show these differences in an explicit and precise form.

There is no reason to think that the English word *anger* represents a “pan-human

prototype" any better than the Ilongot word *liget* or the Ifaluk word *song* does, and once the differences between these concepts have been clearly represented, the untenability of the view which regards *anger* as a pan-human prototype (let alone a pan-human invariant) becomes, it seems to me, self-evident.

Does it mean that there are definitely no universal human emotions? Or that there are no recognisable "pan-human prototypes" in the area of emotion?

I would repeat, like Solomon, that "this should remain an open question for cross-cultural inquiry". One thing, however, seems to be certain: if there are some universal human emotions, or at least some pan-human emotional prototypes, they cannot be identified by means of English folk categories such as *anger*, *shame*, or *disgust*; they can only be identified in a culture-independent semantic meta-language.

3. Retrospect: The Format of the Explications

As mentioned earlier, the format of the explications sketched in the present chapter (and in the preceding one) requires some discussion. The two most important issues involved concern the role of thoughts in emotion concepts and the role of feelings. I will start with the role of thoughts in the conceptualisation of emotions.

That thoughts do play a major role in emotion concepts is in my view beyond question, and I hope that the present analysis helps to make this point clear. What is not clear, however, is in what *form* thoughts enter the structure of emotion concepts.

Many different views can of course be taken on this point, and many have been expressed in the philosophical and psychological literature on emotions. It seems to me, however, that these different views can be reduced, essentially, to two possibilities: the thoughts characteristic of a given emotion can be seen either as its cause or as its situational prototype.

The causal view goes back to Aristotle, who (as pointed out in Gordon 1978:125) defined *fear* (or rather, a Greek word meaning something similar to *fear*) as "a kind of pain or perturbation arising from the idea of impending evil".

The prototype view was put forward in a pioneering study by Iordanskaja (1970, 1974); it also underlies the analysis of a number of emotion terms developed in my own earlier work on emotions (cf. Wierzbicka 1972, 1973, 1980, and 1986a). It assumes that if we say, for example, "John is sad" we mean that 'John is in a state like that which is normally triggered by certain thoughts' (without prejudging whether in this particular case the 'state of sadness' was triggered by 'sad thoughts' or not).

The causal view of emotion concepts is sometimes stated in terms of the 'aboutness of emotions'. For example, Gordon (1974) argues that if one is angry one is angry *about* something, which is taken to indicate that one is *thinking* about something, and that any experiential, physiological, or behavioural components of anger are triggered by those underlying thoughts.

This seems very reasonable. On the other hand, one may doubt whether the same argument would apply to all emotion terms. For example, if one is sad or

depressed, does one have to be sad or depressed ‘about something’? In ordinary language (as distinct from the terminology of psychologists or psychiatrists), sentence (a) sounds odd but sentence (b) does not seem similarly odd (cf. Johnson-Laird and Oatley 1989):

- (a) ?John was angry (surprised, indignant) without knowing why.
- (b) John was sad (depressed) without knowing why.

One possible conclusion is that different emotion concepts have different structures and that some of them specify certain thoughts as the causes of the emotional state, whereas others do not. From a semantic point of view, there would be nothing odd in such a situation. In fact, the long impasse in the semantic study of many other semantic domains may have been partly due to the assumption that all words in a given domain must necessarily have the same kind of semantic structure, for example, that the meaning of *mother* must be symmetrical to the meaning of *father* (cf. on this point the interesting discussion in Mufwene 1983).

It is possible, therefore, that some emotion concepts do have the feature of ‘aboutness’, whereas others don’t. In fact, we will see in chapter 12 that in Russian emotion verbs do seem to have that feature and can combine with an ‘about’ complement, whereas emotion adjectives and adverbs do not.

In this chapter, I do not wish to take a definite stand on the “*because* versus *like*” (i.e., causal versus prototypical) issue, because my purpose here is different. I am interested here in developing a framework for a cross-cultural comparison of emotion concepts, and I think this can be done without prejudging the outcome of the *because* versus *like* debate. For example, whether *anger* and *liget* are ultimately analysed in the causal mode or in the prototypical mode will not affect the aspects of these concepts which have been discussed here. (For further discussion of the semantics of emotions, see Wierzbicka, In press a and c.)

Turning now to the role of the concept ‘feel’ in emotion concepts, we should note that in many non-Western societies, less emphasis seems to be placed on ‘feeling’ than is done in European culture, presumably because of European individualism, tendency to introspection, and so on (cf., for example, Lutz 1985a and 1988; Howell 1981; Johnson 1985; Solomon 1984; Shweder and LeVine 1984; Heelas 1984). In many cultures emotions appear to be linked very closely with moral and social concerns and to be seen largely in terms of social behaviour and moral appraisal rather than in terms of ‘private’, subjective feelings. But if so, is it justified to posit a ‘feel’ component in the explications of all emotion terms?

An objection along these lines appears to be strengthened by the reports that not all languages have a word for ‘feeling’ distinct from the words for thinking and wanting (cf. Lutz 1985a; Howell 1981; Levy 1973).

I do not think, however, that reports of this kind should be accepted at face value. In particular, I am not quite convinced that Ifaluk doesn’t have a word for *feel*. Notably, Ifaluk has the word *niferash*, which Lutz (1988:92) glosses as ‘our insides’ and which she calls “the most general term used to describe internal functioning”. As she points out herself (*Ibid.*), “To say ‘My insides are bad (*Ye ngaw*

niferai)' may mean one is either feeling physically bad or experiencing bad thoughts and emotions, or both, the exact meaning, as with the English phrase 'I feel bad,' being determined by context".

It is possible, then, that despite Lutz' protestations (and despite very real and important differences in their use), Ifaluk does distinguish lexically among the three crucial concepts of thinking (*nunuwan*), wanting (*tip-*), and feeling (*niferash*), and, on further investigation, the same may prove true of all the languages of the world.

The status of 'feeling' as a possible conceptual universal is important because it is now quite clear that the concept of 'emotion' is not universal and cannot be used as a common measure in investigating and comparing different languages and cultures.

In the scholarly literature on 'emotions', 'emotions' are usually contrasted with 'sensations', but natural languages rarely draw a similar distinction, the two being usually subsumed under one category of 'feelings'. In fact, even in English the verb *feel* applies to both bodily and mental phenomena. Scholars committed to the emotion/sensation distinction may deplore this "vagueness" of the verb *feel*, or may even regard this verb as polysemous, but linguistic evidence does not support this view. In other languages, which do not distinguish lexically between "body" and "mind" or between "sensations" and "emotions", there is even less reason to suspect that the equivalent of the word *feel* is polysemous (and that it has two distinct meanings, 'emotion' and 'sensation').

The concept of 'emotion' (born out of the distinction between "emotions" and "sensations") seems to be one of those concepts which originate in the English language and in the ethnopsychology embodied in it and which have become taken over by the language of scholarship as one of its basic concepts.

There is of course nothing wrong with such an elevation in status of an ordinary English concept; but it should be remembered that from a universal, language-independent point of view it is probably the undifferentiated 'feel' which is a truly fundamental human concept, not the more elaborated, more culture-dependent and theory-laden 'emotion'.

The concept of 'emotion' involves a combination of 'feeling', 'thinking', and an unspecified internal process. In the language of universal semantic primitives this can be represented as follows:

<i>emotion</i>
person X thought something
because of this, X felt something
because of this, something happened to X

One could say that the English concept of 'emotions' picks out one type of feeling (cognitively based feelings) as an important category, distinct from other types of feelings; and that, moreover, it links it with a vague reference to something that 'happens' to or in a person as a result of the feeling in question.

I am suggesting, then, that while the concept of 'feeling' is universal (or near-universal) and can be safely used in the investigation of human experience and

human nature, the concept of ‘emotion’ is culture-bound, and cannot be similarly relied on.

As for the observation that in many non-Western societies “emotions may be grouped with moral values . . . , and . . . may be seen as characteristics of situations or relationships rather than as the property of individuals” (Lutz 1985a:81), it seems to me important, but perfectly compatible with the framework proposed here. After all, if we want to compare ‘emotions across cultures’, we must have in mind some stable and culture-independent concept to guide us; otherwise, we will not be able to compare anything at all. The format used here allows for considerable differences among ‘emotion concepts’ belonging to different cultural spheres, and in fact it highlights differences in cultural preoccupations, emphasised by Lutz, Geertz, Scruton, Russell, and others. Above all, it makes it possible to compare ‘emotion concepts’ across cultures in a rigorous and, I hope, illuminating way.