

## Defining Emotion Concepts

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This article demonstrates that emotion concepts—including the so-called basic ones, such as *anger* or *sadness*—can be defined in terms of universal semantic primitives such as 'good', 'bad', 'do', 'happen', 'know', and 'want', in terms of which all areas of meaning, in all languages, can be rigorously and revealingly portrayed.

The definitions proposed here take the form of certain prototypical scripts or scenarios, formulated in terms of thoughts, wants, and feelings. These scripts, however, can be seen as formulas providing rigorous specifications of necessary and sufficient conditions (not for emotions as such, but for emotion concepts), and they do not support the idea that boundaries between emotion concepts are "fuzzy." On the contrary, the small set of universal semantic primitives employed here (which has emerged from two decades of empirical investigations by the author and colleagues) demonstrates that even apparent synonyms such as *sad* and *unhappy* embody different—and fully specifiable—conceptual structures.

### CAN EMOTION CONCEPTS BE DEFINED?

Can 'emotions', or speaking more precisely, emotion concepts, be defined? Intuitively, it seems clear that, for example, words such as *sad*, *unhappy*, *distressed*, *worried*, *sorry*, and *upset*, are mutually related, and that their meanings overlap to a considerable extent. It is also intuitively clear that *sadness*, *anger*, and *fear* are closer to one another than any of them is to *happiness*, in so far as the former are 'bad' feelings where the latter is a 'good' feeling.

If we were able to define all such words, including the most "basic" ones, such as *sadness*, *anger*, *fear*, and *happiness* (pace Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989), we would be able to show exactly what any two of these have in common and how they differ from one another. We would be able to show how *sad* differs from *angry* or from *fear*, how *happy* is related to *unhappy*, how *happiness* differs from *joy*, or *joy* from *pleasure*, how *fright* is related to *surprise* (cf. Ekman, 1980, p. 130), and so on.

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The desirability of definitions in general, and definitions of emotion concepts in particular, has often been acknowledged by cognitive psychologists. As Armstrong, Gleitman, and Gleitman (1983, p. 268) pointed out,

the only good answer [to the question "Why do so many doubt the validity of the definitional view?" A.W.] is that the definitional theory is difficult to work out in the required detail. No one has succeeded in finding the supposed simplest categories (the features).

With respect to emotion concepts, in particular, it has often been said that they cannot be "classically defined" (cf. e.g., Fehr & Russell, 1984), and from this it is often concluded that emotion concepts cannot be defined at all.

Other scholars, however, believe that it is too early to acknowledge defeat. For example, Ortony, Clore, and Foss (1987, p. 344) wrote:

These arguments, however, are far from compelling. First, the observation that philosophers and psychologists have so far failed to specify adequate definitions of emotion(s) does not establish that the goal is impossible. It does support the contention that the problem is very difficult, but such a conclusion is as uninteresting as it is undeniable. In fact, there have been serious attempts to provide definitions for a number of emotions, most notably by Wierzbicka (1972, 1973). Although there has been some criticism of her analysis of the word "afraid" (Pulman, 1983), we are unaware of any systematic rebuttal of her proposals, either by those advocating the impossibility of such definitions, or by anyone else.

I would like to take part of the blame upon myself. The tentative definitions of selected emotion terms, which I proposed 20 years ago, were no more than first approximations, and they were imperfect in a number of respects. Most importantly, they were formulated in a semantic meta-language which was being developed at the same time, and which couldn't be developed without being simultaneously tested in definitions. To have good definitions we needed a good meta-language but to have a good meta-language we needed hundreds of preliminary definitions. Work in both areas had to proceed concurrently, and it required a great deal of time.

In the course of the intervening two decades the "natural semantic meta-language" postulated in that early work has taken shape, and has been tested in hundreds of definitions, both of English words, and of words from many other languages of the world. It has also been tested in the study of grammar and of cross-cultural pragmatics.<sup>1</sup>

In this article I want to show how the current version of the meta-language enables us to construct improved definitions of emotion terms. To show this it would not be enough to offer just a few examples of what might seem to be conveniently selected words. What is needed is a body of defini-

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<sup>1</sup> Compare, in particular, Wierzbicka (1987, 1988b, 1991); also Ameka (1987), Bogusławski (1979, 1989), Chappell (1980, 1986a, 1986b), Goddard (1989a, 1989b), Harkins (1986, 1990), and Wilkins (1986).

tions large enough to be able to reveal the systematic organization of this cognitive domain and to demonstrate conclusively that the proposed method of definition really works.

In what follows, then, discussion will be limited to a minimum, so that as much room as possible is left for the definitions themselves. Some explanations are, nonetheless, indispensable.

### THE NEED FOR SEMANTIC PRIMITIVES

One cannot define everything. To define anything (without direct or indirect circularity) we need some indefinables. If our indefinables, or primitives, are not intuitively intelligible and self-explanatory, then our definitions will explain nothing. As pointed out by Pascal (1667/1963, p. 350) three hundred years ago, if we define *light* (*lumière*) as "a luminary movement of luminous bodies" we have defined nothing at all, because the concepts 'luminary' and 'luminous' are neither clearer nor simpler than 'light' itself.

Psychologists trying to compare and to elucidate emotion concepts have used, at different times, a number of "dimensions" regarded as "primary features of meaning" (cf. Russell, 1989, p. 300). These include "evaluation", "activity" and "potency" (Osgood, May, & Miron, 1975), "sometimes renamed pleasure or positivity, arousal or activation, and control or dominance" (Russell, 1989, pp. 300-301).

For certain purposes, parameters of this kind may be appropriate and helpful. From a semantic point of view, however, concepts of this kind are as complex and obscure as any emotion concepts which one might be trying to elucidate. Some of them are technical (e.g., positivity, arousal, activation, dominance), and have no clear, intuitively graspable meaning whatsoever (nor are they ever defined in terms of clear, intuitively intelligible concepts.)<sup>2</sup> Others, for example, *pleasant* or *pleased*, are nontechnical and their meaning can be intuited through natural language, but they are not less complex than *happy*, *sad*, *angry*, or *worried*. Neither kind can serve, therefore, as useful primitives for the analysis of emotion concepts. If we want to define emotion concepts in a way that would be truly explanatory, we must define them in terms of words which are intuitively understandable (nontechnical), and which themselves are not names of specific emotions or emotional states. All we can use, and in fact all we need, is one general emotion concept 'feel'<sup>3</sup> and a set of basic nonemotion concepts, such as 'want',

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<sup>2</sup> I am not objecting to the use of technical terms if they are introduced via nontechnical ones, but all scientific terminology has to build, ultimately, on clear and intuitively understandable concepts; otherwise, no true understanding will ever be achieved.

<sup>3</sup> 'Feel' was postulated as a universal semantic primitive in Wierzbicka (1972). In later work (cf. in particular, Wierzbicka, 1980), this element came under a cloud and was removed from the list of primitives. After another decade of investigations, however, it appears that the original hypothesis was right (cf. Wierzbicka & Goddard, in press).

'say', 'think', 'know', 'good', 'bad', and so on, which have been independently justified as plausible candidates for the status of irreducible and self-explanatory elements of the "alphabet of human thoughts" (cf. Leibniz, 1903/1961; Wierzbicka, 1972, 1980, 1989a, 1989b, in press-a). The use of such primitives frees our analysis from obvious or hidden circularity and it provides a framework in terms of which all concepts encoded in language (emotion concepts and any other concepts) can be clearly and rigorously portrayed and compared.

### THE SEARCH FOR SEMANTIC PRIMITIVES

As Leibniz (1903/1961) clearly saw three centuries ago, semantic or conceptual primitives can be arrived at only by trial and error; that is, by sustained, systematic attempts to define as many words as possible, so that one could identify on an empirical basis those concepts which serve as the building-blocks from which all others are constructed. The basic guideline in this search was the requirement that the set of simple concepts should contain only those that are truly necessary for defining all the others. What-ever CAN be defined is conceptually complex and SHOULD be defined; whatever CANNOT be defined (without circularity and without going from simple to complex and from clear to obscure) should NOT be defined. Only in this way can the true alphabet of human thoughts be discovered. "*Reducenda omnia alia ad ea quae sunt absolute necessaria ad sententias animi exprimendas*" (All other [expressions] should be reduced to those which are absolutely necessary for expressing the thoughts in our minds; Leibniz, 1903/1961, p. 281). If we do not discover this alphabet of necessary concepts, which cannot be made clearer by any definitions ("*quae nullis definitionibus clariores reddere possunt*," Leibniz, p. 435), we can never successfully elucidate meanings conveyed in language, because without this basic tool we will only be able to translate unknowns into other unknowns. For, as Leibniz (p. 430) put it, "*si nihil per se concipitur nihil omnino concipietur*" (if there were no self-explanatory concepts, nothing at all could ever be understood).

In the 1960s a program similar to Leibniz's was proposed as a possible basis for linguistic semantics (cf. Bogusławski, 1966, 1970), and in 1972, on the basis of empirical investigation of several semantic domains in a few European languages, I proposed in my book *Semantic Primitives* a first hypothetical list of such elementary human concepts. It included 14 elements: *I, you, someone, something, this, want, don't want, think, say, imagine, feel, part, world, and become*.

Since that time, semantic investigations based on the Leibnizian assumptions have been pursued on a wide empirical basis, extending to a number of non-Indo-European languages, for example, to the African Tano-Congo

language Ewe in the work of Ameka (1987, 1990), to Chinese in the work of Chappell (1986a, 1986b), to the Austronesian language Mangap-Mbula, spoken in Papua, New Guinea in the work of Bugenhagen (1990), and to Australian Aboriginal languages in the work of Evans (in press), Goddard (1990), Harkins (1986, 1990), Hudson (1985), and Wilkins (1986). This expansion has prompted the idea that the search for the alphabet of human thoughts should be linked—directly and explicitly—with the search for lexical universals, that is, for concepts that have been lexicalized (as separate words or morphemes) in all the languages of the world. As the empirical basis of the work expanded, and as the theoretical analysis continued over the years, the list of primes originally postulated was revised and expanded. My current hypothesis is that the list includes the following elements:

- “substantives”: I, you, someone, something, people
- “determiners and quantifiers”: this, the same, other, one, two, many/much, all
- “mental predicates”: think (about), say, know (about), feel, want (to)
- “actions and events”: do, happen (to)
- “evaluative”: good, bad
- “descriptive”: big, small
- “time and place”: when, where, after/before, under/above
- “meta-predicates”: no/negation, because, if/would, can/may
- “intensifier”: very
- “taxonomy, partonomy”: kind of, part of
- “hedge/prototype”: like.

A number of points must be made about these conceptual primitives. The first is that in explications some of them appear as different words in certain contexts. This is done only to allow the reader of an explication to understand it more readily, and these variants depend on the (natural) language in which the explication is couched. Thus, for example, in an explication the two elements ‘this’ and ‘someone’ may be combined. However, in English, the combination ‘this someone’ sounds strange, and may confuse the reader, so it is usual to replace it by ‘this person’. It must be stressed that **CONCEPTUALLY** we have the concept ‘this’ modifying the concept ‘someone’, but for readers of English the phrase ‘this person’ conveys the same concepts and seems more natural. This “allolexy” (having two or more forms to express the same concept) occurs with the following concepts in this article: ‘someone’ appears as ‘person’; ‘something’ as ‘thing’, ‘what’ or ‘anything’; ‘when’ as ‘at a time’ or ‘sometimes’; ‘I’ as ‘me’; and negation appears as ‘not’, ‘don’t’ and ‘-n’t’.

As well as this allolexy, there are a few combinations of two concepts that are more clearly expressed in English by a separate word. Thus, rather than the awkward phrase ‘all something’, the word ‘everything’ is used.

Other similar combinations used in this article are: 'all someone' is expressed as 'everybody'; 'not someone' as 'no-one'; 'can't not...' as 'have to...'; and 'at this time' (which is equivalent to 'this' followed by 'when') is expressed as 'now'.

The final point which must be made is a grammatical one. In English the verb *want* can be followed either by a noun phrase (*the book*) or another verb. However, if it is followed by another verb, the word *to* must be inserted (*I want TO do this*). For this reason, in the explications, 'to' appears between 'want' and a following 'do'. Similarly, in English a form of the copula (the verb *to be*) must appear between a noun and a following "descriptive phrase," for example, *this IS good*, *someone WAS like a part of me*. This copula is hence added in the following explications to increase readability. The indefinite article (*a*) is added for similar reasons.

The explications of emotion concepts proposed in this article are constructed exclusively from the primitive concepts previously listed, taking into account the contextual variations mentioned. For a discussion of the methodological problems involved, see Wierzbicka (1989a, 1989b; for reasons of space these problems cannot be discussed here).<sup>4</sup>

In the search for universal semantic primitives there are two independent avenues of empirical evidence: (1) the role a given concept plays in defining other concepts; and (2) the range of languages in which a given concept has been lexicalized. For example, the concept realized in English by the verb *say* is useful for defining, among other things, hundreds of English verbs of speech, such as *ask*, *demand*, *apologize*, *curse*, *scold*, *persuade*, *criticize*, and so on (cf. Wierzbicka, 1987). By contrast, words such as *chase* or *persuade* (proposed by Chomsky (1987, p. 23), apparently in all seriousness, as innate human concepts) are not similarly useful in defining other words. Furthermore, the concept realized in English as *say* is known to have its exact semantic equivalents in hundreds of other languages, and in fact there appears to be no human language without a word expressing this concept. By contrast, English words such as *chase* or *persuade* are highly language-specific, and it is questionable whether they have exact semantic equivalents in ANY other language, let alone in EVERY other language.

The combination of these two independent criteria—defining power and universality—provides a powerful empirical check on the range of hypotheses that could be put forward on the basis of mere speculation, and gives the program of research defined in this way a strongly empirical character.

When the great 17th century thinkers (above all, Descartes, 1952) first formulated the idea that there is an innate stock of human concepts, they

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<sup>4</sup> One important point, which should be borne in mind, is that the primitives have their own syntax, and that together with that syntax they form a natural "mini-language." The "mini-lexicon" listed here can only give an approximate idea of this mini-language; the explications included in this article provide an illustration of how this mini-language is used.

offered two criteria for their identification: (1) these concepts must be intuitively clear and self-explanatory; and (2) they must be impossible to define. For example, it was claimed, it is impossible to define the concept of 'thinking' (in particular, the concept of *cogito* 'I think'), and any attempt to do so can lead only to greater obscurity and confusion; furthermore, there is no need to define this concept, because its meaning is intuitively clear to us. However, Descartes' two criteria have proved insufficient as operational guidelines: It is not always clear whether a concept can or cannot be further defined (without circularity and without increased obscurity), nor whether a concept is, or isn't, as clear and self-explanatory as any human concept can be.

Leibniz (1903/1961) added to Descartes' (1952) two criteria a third one, which has proved much more helpful as an operational guideline: (3) the requirement that the ultimate "simples" in the alphabet of human thought should be not only clear and indefinable, but also demonstrably active as "building blocks" in the construction of other concepts. It is this third criterion which made Leibniz engage in extensive lexicographic experimentation: In order to see which concepts have a potential for defining other concepts, one has to try them out in vast numbers of tentative definitions.

In recent linguistic work, two further criteria have been added to the three inherited from the 17th century: (4) the requirement that candidates for the status of innate and universal human concepts should "prove themselves" in extensive descriptive work involving many different languages of the world (genetically and culturally distant from one another); and (5) the requirement that the concepts which have proved themselves as building blocks in definitions should also prove themselves as lexical universals, that is, as concepts which have their own "names" in all the languages of the world. Of the candidates considered by Leibniz, some (for example 'I' and 'this') have proved themselves in this respect, whereas others (e.g., 'perceive') have not.

### THE NEED FOR LEXICAL UNIVERSALS

Psychologists writing about emotions and emotion concepts usually focus, understandably, on those which have been lexicalized in English (the language they are writing in). But to understand human conceptualization of emotions we also need to take an interest in the emotion concepts lexicalized in other languages of the world. Furthermore, we need to try to understand those concepts "from a native's point of view" (cf. Geertz, 1984). We have to try to enter the conceptual world of other peoples, and to abandon our "Anglo" perspective in interpreting that world.

For example, if we look at the Ifaluk language of Micronesia, studied by Lutz (1988), we will see that Ifaluk doesn't have a concept corresponding to

the English 'anger', and that it has, instead, a concept of 'song', which has no equivalent in English. (For a detailed semantic analysis of this concept, see Wierzbicka, 1988a, 1992a). Trying to explain in English what the word *song* means, Lutz glossed it, informally, as "justified anger." But, as Lutz's discussion makes clear, to the Ifaluks *song* is not "a kind of anger" just as to native speakers of English, *anger* is not "a kind of *song*." To say that *song* is a "justified anger" means interpreting this concept through the prism of the English language (just as to say that *anger* is an "aggressive *song*" would mean interpreting this concept through the prism of the Ifaluk language).

Every language imposes its own classification upon human emotional experience, and English words such as *anger* or *sadness* are cultural artifacts of the English language, not culture-free analytical tools (cf. Russell, 1989). On the other hand, conceptual primitives such as 'good' and 'bad', or 'want', 'know', 'say', and 'think', are not cultural artifacts of the English language but belong to the universal alphabet of human thoughts; and they do appear to have their semantic equivalents in all, or nearly all, languages of the world. By defining emotion concepts encoded in a given language in terms of lexical universals we can free ourselves from the bias of our own language and we can see those concepts "from a native's point of view," while at the same time making them comparable with the concepts encoded in any other language.

Lutz (1985, pp. 68–69) stated:

In the translation of ethnopsychologies, we rely heavily on our own and others' understanding of concepts such as 'mind', 'self', and 'anger' . . . If the terms of our description themselves are taken as nonproblematic . . . , we run the risk of reducing the emotional lives of others to the common denominator or intersection with our own.

The point is well taken, but the problem is not insoluble: We can avoid this risk by explaining emotion concepts not in terms of Anglo concepts such as 'mind', 'self', or 'anger', but in terms of lexical universals, that is, concepts encoded in distinct words in any human language (such as 'good' or 'bad', 'know' or 'want').

It is true that the identification of lexical universals is not a straightforward matter, and that the list proposed here must be regarded as tentative: First, there are several thousand languages in the world, and it is impossible to check a hypothetical list against all of them, and second, to determine whether a language has a word for a particular concept is a task that requires painstaking analysis. For example, it takes the larger part of a whole article for Goddard (1990) to establish conclusively that the Australian Aboriginal language Yankuntjatjara does have an exact semantic equivalent of the English verb *want*. Needless to say, neither the difficulties involved nor Goddard's arguments can be reported here for reasons of space.



Similarly, it is by no means easy to establish whether or not 'feel' is a true lexical universal. In fact, Lutz (1985, p. 47) claimed that Ifaluk does not distinguish lexically between 'feel' and 'think', and that the most relevant word in this area, *nunuwan*, "refers to mental events ranging from what we consider thought to what we consider emotion . . . Thus, *nunuwan* may be translated . . . as 'thought/emotion'." Lutz argued that "it is not simply that thought evokes, or is accompanied by, an emotion; the two are inextricably linked. *Nunuwan* is included in the definitions of various words we would consider emotion words. For example, *yarofali* 'longing/missing' is the state of 'continually *nunuwan* about [for example] one's dead mother'" (p. 48).

But in fact, Lutz's (1985) careful and admirably presented data are quite compatible with a different analysis; namely, that *nunuwan* means 'think' rather than 'think/feel', and that its frequent emotive connotations are due to context rather than to the word itself. For example, one of Lutz's informants says of a pregnant woman "R." that she "has lots of *nunuwan* because the health aide is leaving on the next ship which is coming, and she [R.] *nunuwan* that there will be trouble with the delivery of the baby" (p. 47). This is quite compatible with the interpretation that *nunuwan* always means 'think', and that emotions are only implied by the word's context.

As for the primitive 'feel', it appears that it does have an exponent in Ifaluk, too, although in the form of a noun rather than a verb. The word in question is *niferash*, and Lutz's (1985) primary gloss for it is "our insides," but her data suggest that *niferash* may mean 'feel' as well as 'insides', and that it can refer to physical as well as psychological feelings, just like the English verb *feel*: "To say 'My insides are bad' (*Ye ngaw niferai*) may mean either that one is feeling physically bad or experiencing bad thoughts and emotions, or both. The exact meaning, as with the English phrase 'I feel bad', is determined by context" (p. 47).

The suggestion that *nunuwan* can be linked (invariably) with the primitive 'think', and *niferash* with 'feel', is supported by informants' comments such as the following one, cited by Lutz (1985): "T. said that if we had bad *nunuwan*, we will have bad insides, and if we have good *nunuwan*, we will have good insides" (p. 47). This comment seems to mean that "bad thoughts" cause "bad feelings." It is also supported by data from numerous other languages (in particular, Australian Aboriginal languages), in which some words for internal body parts (stomach, heart, liver) can also mean 'feel', so that, for example, "I stomach good" means 'I feel good', and "I stomach bad" means 'I feel bad' (cf. Wierzbicka & Goddard, in press).

The identification of lexical universals is a long-term task of cross-cultural semantics. The decade or so which has been devoted to this task so far has produced a list that must be regarded as provisional and subject to amendments. But this list is sufficient to be used as the basis of a natural semantic meta-language, in terms of which meanings in general, and meanings of emotion words in particular, can be effectively described and compared.

## THE NEED FOR PROTOTYPES AND SCRIPTS

As pointed out by Locke (1690/1959, p. 38), one cannot convey to a blind person what *red* means, or rather, what experience it is linked with. Similarly, one cannot fully convey in words what experiences words such as *sad* or *fear* stand for. It is not true, however, that words such as *red* or *sad* cannot be defined at all: Both types can be defined in terms of certain prototypes. In the case of color concepts, prototypes are provided by features of human environment and human biology such as blood, sky, vegetation, and so on (cf. Wierzbicka, 1990a). In the case of emotion concepts, prototypes are provided by certain situations typically linked with a certain feeling, situations that can be defined in terms of certain mental scenarios. I hypothesize that we actually interpret our emotional experience in terms of such scenarios, and the fact that emotion concepts encoded in different languages lend themselves very well to modelling in terms of such scenarios, supports this hypothesis.

For example, the English words *joy*, *sadness*, *remorse*, and *anger* can be linked with the following hypothetical thoughts: 'something very good is happening' (*joy*), 'something bad happened' (*sadness*), 'I did something bad' (*remorse*), 'this person did something bad' (*anger*). This does not mean that the feelings described by these words HAVE to be caused by these thoughts, because, as Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, p. 92) insisted, "a basic emotion such as sadness can be felt for no known reason" (see, however, Ortony & Clore, 1989). But an analysis based on a prototypical script solves this difficulty: It is one thing to feel something BECAUSE of a particular thought, and another, to feel LIKE a person would who would be thinking that particular thought.

As I tried to show in my earlier discussions of this topic (cf. Wierzbicka, 1972, 1973; cf. also Iordanskaja, 1974), emotions are often overtly described in terms of a prototypical situation ("I felt as one does when . . .", or "I felt as one would if . . ."). I hypothesize that ready-made emotion terms such as *sadness* or *joy* provide handy abbreviations for scenarios which members of a given culture see as particularly common and salient.

By way of a preliminary illustration, I will attempt to define five English words: *frustration*, *relief*, *disappointment*, *surprise*, and *amazement*.

### *Frustration*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

I want to do something

I can't do this

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

*Relief*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something bad will happen

I don't want this

because of this, this person feels something bad

after this, this person thinks something like this:

I know now: this will not happen

because of this, this person feels something good

X feels like this

*Disappointment*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something good will happen

I want this

after this, this person thinks something like this:

I know now: this will not happen

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

*Surprise*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something happened now

I didn't think before now: this will happen

if I thought about this I would have said: this will not happen

because of this, this person feels something

X feels like this

*Amazement*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something happened now

I didn't know before now: this can happen

if I thought about this I would have said: this cannot happen

because of this, this person feels something

X feels like this

Needless to say, explications of this kind are very different from so-called classical definitions, based on a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, applying not to concepts but to *denotata* (so that one can say of any extralinguistic entity or state whether it does or does not meet them). Rather, they could be called "semantic definitions." Hopefully, however, it will be noticed that a semantic definition of the kind proposed here is a fairly precise and flexible tool of conceptual analysis, and that it allows us to capture subtle and elusive aspects of meaning far beyond the level of detail and

sophistication which was aimed at, let alone attained, in earlier analyses of emotion concepts. Most importantly, definitions of the kind proposed here are intuitively intelligible and intuitively verifiable; they can, therefore, be discussed with native speakers, tested against native speakers' intuitions, and revised and amended on the basis of such discussions. Though not perfect, therefore, they are perfectable, and a continued dialog with native speakers never fails to result in an increased level of consensus.

In this article, I will define a few dozen English emotion terms, using the same format. I will group them in such a way as to highlight the differences between closely related concepts, such as *joy* and *happiness*, or *sad* and *distressed*.

The groupings suggested in the following are partly arbitrary, because emotion terms of any language exhibit a complex network of relationships and could be classified in a number of different ways. Nonetheless, certain semantic dimensions do emerge as a natural basis for classification and discussion.

One general theme, perhaps the most important one, involves things that happen to us, or to other people, good things and bad things. A second broad theme involves things that people do, again, bad things and good things. A third theme, not so prominent but also important, has to do with what we think about ourselves, and what other people think about us. A fourth theme, which for reasons of space will not be investigated here, involves emotional attitudes towards other people, such as *love*, *hate*, *respect*, *pity*, *compassion*, or *envy*. (Most concepts of this kind are based on the same basic parameters of 'do' and 'happen' and 'good' and 'bad' as the concepts investigated here. For example, it is not difficult to detect the component 'something bad happened to this person' in *pity* or *compassion*, and 'something good happened to this person' in *envy*.) Thus, the most prominent parameters in terms of which people appear to think about their emotional experience, and on which an illuminating classification of emotion concepts across languages and cultures can be based, are: 'bad' and 'good', 'happen' and 'do', 'want' and 'don't want', 'I' and 'someone' (or 'everybody').<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I do not claim that this classification is exhaustive, or that it is the only possible one. In particular, it should be noted that concepts such as *surprise* or *amazement* do not imply anything 'good' or 'bad', 'wanted' or 'unwanted'. In fact, Ortony and Turner (1990, p. 317) suggested that *surprise* is not an emotion because it is not "valenced" and emotions have to be "valenced" (either positive or negative) by definition. But a definition that requires emotions to be "valenced" is entirely arbitrary. In natural language *surprise* and *amazement* do count as emotions, as the unacceptability of the following sentences shows:

\*His face, full of amazement, betrayed no emotion.

\*His face showed surprise, but it didn't betray any emotion.

## EVIDENCE FOR DEFINITIONS

A definition (or explication) is a hypothesis about the meaning of a word. It is arrived at by examining the range of a word's use, and it is verified by checking whether it can account for that range. For example, if we establish that two words have an overlapping range of use we need overlapping definitions, which would account for both the similarity and the difference.

Consider, for example, the English word *happy* and the Polish word given by dictionaries as its equivalent: *szczęśliwy*. As Barańczak (1990, pp. 12–13) pointed out, the range of use of the two words is not the same.

Take the word "happy," perhaps one of the most frequently used words in Basic American. It's easy to open an English–Polish or English–Russian dictionary and find an equivalent adjective. In fact, however, it will not be equivalent. The Polish word for "happy" (and I believe this also holds for other Slavic languages) has a much more restricted meaning; it is generally reserved for rare states of profound bliss, or total satisfaction with serious things such as love, family, the meaning of life, and so on. Accordingly, it is not used as often as "happy" is in American common parlance. The question one hears at (stand-up) parties—"Is everybody happy?"—if translated literally into Polish, would seem to come from a metaphysical treatise or a political utopia rather than from social chitchat. Incidentally, it is also interesting that Slavic languages don't have an exact equivalent for the verb "to enjoy." I don't mean to say that Americans are a nation of superficial, backslapping enjoyers and happy-makers, as opposed to our suffering Slavic souls. What I'm trying to point out is only one example of the semantic incompatibilities which are so firmly ingrained in languages and cultures that they sometimes make mutual communication impossible—or, rather, they turn it into a ritual exchange of meaningless grunts and purrs. "Are you happy?" E.E. is asked by his cordial host. "Yes, I am." "Are you enjoying yourself?" "Sure I am." What else can be said? What would be the point in trying to explain that his Eastern European mind does not necessarily mean what his American vocabulary communicates?

In fact, it is not only the Polish word *szczęśliwy* or the Russian word *счастливый* that differs from the English word *happy* in the ways described: The German word *glücklich* or French word *heureux* differs from *happy* in much the same way (cf. Wierzbicka, 1992b). To account for these differences, I have postulated for these words the following two explications:

### A. *X feels happy*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something good happened to me

I wanted this

I don't want other things

because of this, this person feels something good

X feels like this

- B. *X feels sčastliv(yj) (glücklich, heureux, etc.)*  
 X feels something  
 sometimes a person thinks something like this:  
   something very good happened to me  
   I wanted this  
   everything is good  
   I can't want other things  
 because of this, this person feels something good  
 X feels like this

The two explanations differ in three respects: First, B has one additional component, 'everything is good' (by implication, 'everything that is happening to me'); second, 'good' in A contrasts with 'very good' in B; and third, 'I don't want other things' in A contrasts with 'I can't want other things' in B. These three differences account, I think, for the "absolute" connotations of *sčastlivyj* and the more limited, more pragmatic character of *happy*, discussed by Barańczak (1990) and confirmed by numerous linguistic facts such as, for example, the fact that one can say *quite happy* but not *\*sovsem sčastlivyj* or *\*ganz glücklich* (for other evidence, see Wierzbicka, 1992b).

Thus, a definition of the kind proposed here embodies a hypothesis about a language-specific psychological script, unconsciously used by speakers of a given language in interpreting their own and other people's emotional experience. A hypothesis of this kind is tested against the potential range of use of a given word, and—if necessary—is modified to fit that range as closely as possible. Definitions proposed here are, therefore, expected to have full predictive power; and they are seen not just as useful analytical devices for summarizing our knowledge about a language's emotion lexicon, but as substantive hypothesis about the underlying psychological realities.

## EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS

In the format of analysis adopted here the focus is on feeling, rather than on any other aspect of emotional experience. Effectively, what is being explicated here are sentences such as "She felt happy/angry/sad" or "He felt joy/anxiety/irritation" rather than the intuitively more basic "She was happy/angry/sad/irritated." I agree with the numerous writers on the subject who have insisted that emotions cannot be reduced to feelings (cf. e.g., Lyons, 1980, and the references cited there). The choice of the "X felt..." rather than the "X was..." frame in this article was motivated by the main purpose of this article, which aims at comparing emotion concepts, and revealing similarities and differences between different emotion concepts.

The main difference between sentences such as "X was afraid (sad, angry etc.)" and their "feel" counterparts ("X felt afraid, sad, angry, etc.") is that the former appear to actually attribute to the experiencer a thought

(e.g., 'something bad can happen'), whereas in "feel" sentences a thought is only evoked as part of the prototype (cf. Ortony & Clore, 1989).

As pointed out by Armon-Jones (1986, p. 52), sentences such as "I am angry with you/ashamed of you" imply a negative appraisal which would not be successfully conveyed by sentences such as "I feel angry with you/ashamed of you" (in fact, one would be more likely to say "I feel angry/ashamed" than "I feel angry with you/ashamed of you"). This difference between "be" sentences and "feel" sentences supports the idea that the former, but not the latter, attribute to the experiencer a thought.

In the natural semantic meta-language we could portray the distinction in question as follows:<sup>6</sup>

*X is frightened*

X thinks something like this:

something bad can happen

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 feels frightened*

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something bad can happen

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, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

Another possible difference between "be" sentences and "feel" sentences involves the role of various "bodily events" in the emotion situation (changes in blood pressure, body temperature, muscle contraction, and so on). Events of this kind are clearly more relevant to sentences such as "X was afraid" or "X was angry" than to their "feel" counterparts ("X felt afraid," "X felt angry"). It could be suggested, therefore, that the former, in contrast to the latter, should also be assigned a component along the following lines: 'something was happening in/to X because of this'. But the matter requires further investigation and will not be pursued here.

### THE "SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EMOTIONS"

Among many controversies in the recent literature on emotions, one of the more important ones is that between supporters of a "labelling" and a "constructivist" approach. The crucial question in this debate is this: Do emotion

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<sup>6</sup> In an earlier article (Wierzbicka, 1990b) I suggested a slightly different way of accounting for the semantic differences between "be" and "feel" sentences (see, also, Wierzbicka, 1980).

terms provide labels for independently existing emotions or do they contribute to the construction of emotions themselves (by imposing an interpretation on the emotional experience and by creating certain assumptions, norms, and expectations, which may guide behavior and shape interpersonal relationships)?

The analysis of emotion concepts advanced in this article is neutral with respect to that debate. Whether or not the concept encoded in the English word *happy* influences (as well as reflects) emotional experience in English-speaking countries, it is essential to understand exactly what this word means, and how it differs in meaning from its closest counterparts in other languages (such as the German *glücklich* or the Ifaluk *ker*), and from its closest relatives in English itself (such as, e.g., *joy*, *enjoy*, or *pleasure*).

My own view is that the theory of the social construction of emotions (or at least one version of it) is largely right, and that concepts such as *happy* in English, *toska* in Russian, *song* in Ifaluk, or *amae* in Japanese do indeed provide certain "scripts," which native speakers can use as a basis for their interpretation of feelings and upon which they can model their emotions and their relations with other people. It is precisely for this reason that concepts of this kind offer invaluable keys to the understanding of cultures and societies (cf. Wierzbicka, 1992a). But to be able to serve as such keys, they must be first rigorously analyzed and clearly understood.

This view is not inconsistent with the idea that there may be some universals of human emotions, but it draws the attention to the danger of relying on unexamined "commonsense assumptions of our local culture" (Harré 1986, p. 4). As Harré pointed out,

Instead of asking the question, "What is anger?" we would do well to begin by asking, "How is the word 'anger', and other expressions that cluster around it, actually used in this or that cultural milieu and type of episode?" The results may be startling. Unraveling the basis of usage will lead us deep into the heart of emotion theory, and bring to the subsequent empirical work, including the study of the physiology of the emotions, a sophistication it has sadly lacked.

The first step to a more sophisticated theory will be to show how, in research, priority must be given to obtaining a proper understanding of how various emotion vocabularies are used. (p. 4)

Semantic analysis of emotion terms (and other linguistic resources including grammatical constructions; cf. in particular, Ameka, 1990; Bugenhagen, 1990) undertaken in this article and in the other works by me and my colleagues listed in the References attempts to do what Harré and some of his colleagues have called for.

It should be added that even scholars who believe in the existence of "natural" or "hard-wired" emotions cannot afford not to take an interest



in the semantics of emotion terms in natural language (at the risk of ethnocentrism and "cultural imperialism," a point recognized explicitly by Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989, 1992).

This article deals with emotion concepts rather than with emotions as such. I believe, however, with Harré (1986, p. 12), that for further progress in the study of emotions methodological enrichment of the prevailing practice is necessary, and that "the first enrichment involves the priority that must be given to linguistic studies."

Unfortunately, Harré's point is not always appreciated by other students of emotions, including "social constructivists." For example, Coulter (1986, p. 122) asserted that "what distinguishes grief from remorse and disappointment from shame is not a determinate inner feeling but responses, actions, appraisals and situations in the social world." This is at variance with Harré's (1986, p. 4) comment that "anger can be only what this or that folk use the word *anger*, or something roughly approximating it in their culture, to pick out." The way English speakers use the words *grief*, *remorse*, *disappointment*, or *shame* does imply specific inner feelings, qualitatively different from one another, although the meaning of each word includes other components as well (in particular, different thoughts and assumptions).<sup>7</sup> This is particularly clear in the case of the "feel" patterns ("X felt Adj/Participle/Noun"):

I felt grief/remorse  
I felt ashamed/disappointed  
I felt sad/angry

But the other forms of English "emotion talk," too, imply qualitatively different feelings (although they may imply thoughts, wants, and other elements as well). It is interesting to note, in this connection, contrasts such as the following ones:

I felt/had a pang of regret/jealousy  
?I felt/had a pang of joy/anger/indignation

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<sup>7</sup> Linguistic evidence shows that emotion terms may differ from one another in the role attributed to feelings and thoughts respectively. For example, one can say in English

I feel sad/happy today, I don't know why.  
and even

I don't know why I am so happy today.  
but hardly

\*I feel disappointed/relieved today, I don't know why.  
(Cf. Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989.) Linguistic evidence of this kind refutes also Coulter's (1986) claims that "to feel some emotion is to feel in some way *about* someone or something" (p. 124), precisely because one CAN say in English "I feel sad/happy today, I don't know why" (cf. Griffith, 1989).

Linguistic evidence of this kind doesn't perhaps show much about the nature of emotions as such, but it does show something about the English folk theory of emotions reflected in the English language; and as both "social constructivists" such as Harré (1986) and "naturalists" such as Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, 1992) agree, one can't elucidate the nature of emotions without paying serious attention to the folk theories of emotions reflected in language. (In other words, I am not saying that feelings associated with different emotion words are necessarily qualitatively different, but only that they are construed as such in the folk theory reflected in the English language.)

Semantic explications don't have to be viewed as tools for identifying independently existing distinct emotional realities. They are tools for identifying concepts with which a society operates. How, or to what extent, these concepts contribute to the construction of experiential and social realities is a question which must be addressed independently, and which cannot relieve us of the task of elucidating the concepts as such.

### COMPARISON WITH OTHER APPROACHES TO DEFINITIONS OF EMOTION CONCEPTS

Attempts at systematic analysis of emotion concepts, across a large area of the lexicon, are undertaken very infrequently; most authors writing about emotion concepts are content to mention just a few examples, in an ad hoc fashion. With respect to English, two notable recent exceptions are an article by Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989) and a book by Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988). By way of comparison with the present approach, I will adduce here the definitions of *disappointment* and *relief* included in these two works:

*disappointment*: sadness caused by failure to achieve goal (Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989, p. 112)

*relief*: happiness as a result of something that brings to an end fear or sadness (Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989, p. 118)

*disappointment*: (displeased about) the disconfirmation of the prospect of a desirable event (Ortony et al., 1988, p. 122)

*relief*: (pleased about) the disconfirmation of the prospect of an undesirable event (Ortony et al., 1988, p. 121)

In formulae of this kind the authors attempt to define one emotion term via others (e.g., *disappointed* via *sad* or *displeased*, or *relieved* via *happy*, *pleased*, *sadness* or *fear*). This method of analysis makes it impossible to compare emotion concepts with one another (e.g., it makes it impossible to see how *sad* differs in meaning from *displeased*, or how *pleased* differs from *happy*). It is also empirically inadequate, because it leads to false predic-

tions. For example, if the proposed analyses were correct one should not be able to say

I am disappointed, but I am not sad.  
I feel relieved, but I don't feel happy.

as one can't say

\*It is a spaniel, but it is not a dog.  
\*It is a parrot, but it is not a bird.

But, in fact, relief doesn't necessarily imply happiness, nor disappointment, sadness.

Furthermore, being phrased in terms of concepts which are specific to English, and which have no semantic equivalents in most other languages of the world, definitions offered in the two works in question make it impossible to see how English emotion concepts (e.g., 'disappointment' or 'relief') are related to emotion concepts in other languages of the world. It hardly needs to be added that English words such as *disconfirmation*, *prospect*, and *goal* have no equivalents in most languages of the world either (in contrast to *know*, *want*, *think*, *do*, *happen*, *feel*, *good*, and *bad*). An analysis relying on English concepts with no equivalent elsewhere in the world makes it impossible for the analysts ever to reach a truly universal perspective on emotions and on the habitual conceptualization of emotions linked with different languages.

Last but not least, the rigid traditional format of definition (with a *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*, i.e., the "nearest kind" and the "specific difference," e.g., "*bachelor*—unmarried man") makes it impossible to discover the whole variability of emotion concepts encoded in language, to reveal the role of prototypes and scenarios in these concepts, or to show explicitly the links among the three crucial variables: thoughts, wants, and feelings.

### WHAT IS THE USE OF DEFINITIONS?

As mentioned earlier, the need for definitions of emotion concepts has often been acknowledged by cognitive psychologists, and yet, when confronted with a long set of complex and lengthy definitions, some readers are likely to feel a bit disconcerted: What is the point of it all? For the benefit of such readers, let me restate here, very briefly, a few basic points (for further discussion, see, in particular, Wierzbicka, 1986, 1992a, 1992b, and in press-b).

1. Emotions play a crucial role in human lives and in human affairs, and the study of emotions is a vital and necessary part of psychology and cognitive science.

2. Emotions are exceptionally difficult to investigate (so much so that until recently they were regarded as simply inaccessible to scientific study).
3. A wealth of insight into the structure of emotions and into the nature of people's emotional lives is contained in the folk theories of emotions (cf. Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1992); and folk theories of emotions are crystallized in the language of emotions, in particular in the emotion lexicon of a given natural language.
4. Scholars wishing to study emotions rely to a considerable extent on the emotion concepts provided by their native language. This is unavoidable and not necessarily harmful: provided they are aware of this fact and don't delude themselves that when they speak, for example, of 'anger', 'joy', or 'disgust' they are talking about some biologically determined, universal human realities, and if they realize that they are viewing human emotional experience through the prism of their own language.
5. By studying the concepts encoded in English words such as *disappointment*, *relief*, *distress*, or *anger* from a universal, language-independent perspective, we can, first of all, learn a great deal about a system of thought and knowledge internalized by the speakers of English, and second, we can learn how to go beyond that system and thus free ourselves of the confusion between human emotions and English emotion concepts, which has plagued, and still plagues, a good deal of the literature on emotions.
6. By studying English emotion terms we can prepare the ground for a cross-cultural comparative study of emotion concepts: a task vital for the understanding of both human culture and human cognition.

### BAD THINGS HAPPENING

Many English emotion terms refer to "bad things" happening to people. They include *sad*, *unhappy*, *distressed*, *upset*, *sorrow*, *sorry*, *grief*, *despair*, and *depressed*, which I will now define one by one, using the format illustrated before.

*Sad* (e.g., X feels sad)

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something bad happened

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

If I could I would want to do something because of this

I can't do anything

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

In a prototypical scenario, the “bad event” is in the past (‘something bad happened’, e.g., somebody died). The component ‘I would want: it didn’t happen’ signals something like regret. The imaginary—but only imaginary—impulse to do something (‘I would want to do something’), combined with a feeling of helplessness (‘I can’t do anything’) implies something like resignation.

*Unhappy* (e.g., X feels unhappy)

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something bad happened to me

I don’t want this

because of this, I would want to do something

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

The main difference between *unhappy* and *sad* consists in the personal character of the former: If my neighbor’s close friend dies I may be *sad* but not *unhappy*, but if my own close friend dies I may well feel *unhappy*.

Furthermore, *unhappy* suggests a more violent and less resigned frame of mind than *sad*. For example, if one says “I am unhappy about it” one may well intend to ‘do something about it’. By contrast, if one says “I am sad” one doesn’t intend to change the situation; and one can’t even say \* “I am sad about it.” This difference is accounted for by the unaccepting component ‘I don’t want this’, and by the absence of the resigned component ‘I can’t do anything’ in the explication of *unhappy*.

The combination of a past event (‘something bad HAPPENED’) with a current rejection (‘I don’t want this’) may seem illogical, but in natural language “illogicalities” of this kind are very common. (One characteristic example was provided recently by the sign “1940 Annexation NO!” displayed by Lithuanian demonstrators in Vilnius in January 1990.)

*Distressed*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something bad is happening to me now

I don’t want this

because of this, I would want to do something

I don’t know what I can do

I want someone to do something

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

In Ekman (1973), and in other works on facial expression of emotions, the words *distress* or *distressed* are often used to refer to crying infants, whereas the word *sad* is used in connection with photographs showing

adults who neither cry nor scream (one CAN imagine tears of sadness, but only tears, not loud crying or screaming).

This contrast in the choice of labels is consistent with the definitions proposed here. The state of mind of a crying infant is no doubt more consistent with a present tense personal concern ('something bad IS happening TO ME now'), posited here for *distressed*, than with the past tense impersonal thought posited for *sad* ('something bad HAPPENED').

Furthermore, a crying infant is not quietly accepting the situation but actively opposing it ('I don't want this'). The infant may feel helpless and unable to cope with that situation ('I don't know what I can do') but he or she is not passive; rather, he or she is trying to signal his or her feelings to the outside world, thus implicitly calling for help ('I want someone to do something').

The common phrase *distress signals*, used with reference to ships, points in the same direction. The ship's crew may well wish to signal a message along the following lines: 'something bad is happening to us', 'we don't want this', 'because of this, we would want to do something', 'we don't know what we can do', 'we want someone (else) to do something'. But there would be no point in any ship sending out "signals of sadness," or, for that matter, "signals of unhappiness."

The word 'now' ('at this time') in the explication of *distressed* may seem redundant, given the present tense of the verb in 'something bad IS happening to me'; nonetheless it may be justified, as it helps to account for the short span of *distress*. *Joy*, too, has a present orientation ('something good IS happening'), and so does *worry* ('something IS happening'), but they can both refer to the "present time" in a broad sense; by contrast, *distress* always refers to the "present time" in a more narrow, more specific sense. For example, if I know that somebody that I love "is coming" next month, this may fill me with *joy* for many days; and if I *worry* about my child's poor progress at school, I may be thinking about months rather than days or hours. But *distress* seems to involve an immediate reaction to what is happening NOW ("today" rather than "in the present period").

As a final piece of evidence for these definitions, consider the following passage from a recent newspaper article, reporting Australian academics' *distress* at what is happening to Australian education as a result of the current Government's policies (*The Australian*, July 3, 1991, p. 11):

What we are saying to the Government is: "ignore this at your peril." We are really doing them a favour, 18 months before an election, by showing how deeply academics feel.

We want a result. We aren't interested in the Coalition or the Government, we are doing this for higher education. The bottom line is that people are distressed at what is happening to the higher education system.

If the academics said they were *sad* rather than *distressed* they would be implying that something bad had already happened and that they couldn't do anything about. (Consequently, they would not be sad *AT* something, but *BECAUSE* of something.) The choice of *distressed* implies here a current situation ('something bad is happening to us now'), an opposition to this situation ('we don't want this'), a desire to do something ('because of this, we would want to do something'), uncertainty as to what one can do ('we don't know what we can do'), and a call for action by someone else, the Government ('we want someone to do something').<sup>8</sup>

### *Upset*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something bad happened to me now

I would want: this didn't happen

because of this, I would want to do something

I don't know what I can do

I can't think now

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

A person is *upset* by something that has happened to him 'before now', not by something that *IS* happening to him 'now'. But the event in question is very recent, so much so that the experiencer hasn't had the time to regain his balance (as he is expected to do shortly).

The combination of the past tense with the word 'now' in the explication is meant to capture both the pastness of the event and its immediate character (cf. the same combination in the sentence "It happened to me just now"). At the moment, the experiencer is off balance and cannot think as usual. His attitude is not passive, or resigned, as in sadness ('I can't do anything'); rather, he is confused and temporarily cannot cope ('I don't know what I can do'). But unlike a person who is *distressed*, someone who is *upset* is not crying for help or otherwise drawing attention to himself.

### *Sorrow*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

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<sup>8</sup> Ortony and Turner (1990, p. 325) proposed to use the term *distress* in a very general sense, so that it can be applied to any emotion involving a "negative affective state of general unhappiness" including, for example, *anger* and *fear*: "one cannot be angry without being distressed in this sense. This implies that distress is more basic than anger." But they would probably agree that this is an entirely arbitrary use of the term *distress* (and, for that matter, of the term *unhappiness*). What they really mean is that both *anger* and *fear* have a component which can be properly phrased as 'I feel something bad'. But the concept of 'distress' also includes other components, which are absent from *anger* or *fear*.

something very bad happened to me  
 I couldn't not think about this before now  
 I can't not think about this now  
 I would want: this didn't happen  
 because of this, I would want to do something  
 no-one can do anything  
 because of this, this person feels something bad  
 X feels like this

*Sorrow* is personal, like *distress* and *unhappiness*, not impersonal like *sadness* ('something very bad happened TO ME'). It is more "intense" than *sadness* ('something VERY bad happened to me'). It is caused by a past event (somebody's death, some other great loss), but it is not focused on that past event as such. Rather, it implies a long-term state resulting from a past event, or from a past discovery of a long-term condition (e.g., childlessness or an incurable disease of one's child or spouse). If the experiencer focuses on the past event as such then one would speak of a *tragedy* rather than of a *sorrow*. *Sorrow* has its roots in the past, but the stress is on the ongoing, long-term state ('I couldn't not think about this before now', 'I can't not think about this now'). Unlike *distress* and *unhappiness*, and like *sadness*, it is consistent with calm or resignation. It is not unlike long-term suffering, or pain, except that it is incompatible with resistance and rebellion.

There is also something final and irreparable about *sorrow*, linking it with *grief*, to which we will turn shortly. *Sorrow* and *grief* are also linked by the experiencer's dwelling on the painful subject; but in the case of *grief* and *grieving*, the experiencer intentionally focuses on the painful subject ('I want to think about this') whereas in the case of *sorrow* it is, rather, an inability to forget ('I can't not think about this'). Furthermore, *sorrow*, as pointed out earlier, suggests something like acceptance and resignation (one can't do anything about it), whereas *grief*—although caused by something equally irrevocable—does not imply that, and is compatible with inner resistance. But before we portray *grief*, we will first have a look at the word *sorry*, from which *sorrow* is derived, although synchronically it is different from it in meaning.

*Sorry*  
 X feels something  
 sometimes a person thinks something like this:  
 something bad happened to someone  
 I would want: this didn't happen  
 because of this, this person feels something bad  
 X feels like this

This definition is extremely simple, and it correctly predicts the extremely wide range of this word's use. If the person to whom something bad happened is you, and if the event was caused by me, the word *sorry* can be used



to convey an apology. If I am not responsible and yet feel 'something bad' because of something that happened to someone, then my feeling *sorry* "for them" is akin to compassion. If the person to whom something bad happened is me, then *sorry* can be akin to regret. For example, one could say:

I'm sorry that it didn't happen to me.

I'm sorry that I can't come (but I have an essay to write).

I'm sorry I couldn't go to Verona.

But this use of *sorry* with respect to oneself implies a detached way of looking at oneself as 'someone', and it is less compatible with direct personal misfortune such as illness or accident.

?I'm sorry that I had a car accident.

?I'm sorry that my house got burnt down.

In these sentences, which report a real personal disaster, the word *sorry* sounds inappropriate, because its meaning implies that 'something bad happened to SOMEONE', without focusing on the personal aspect of the misfortune ('something bad happened to ME').

### *Grief*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something very bad happened to me

someone was like a part of me

something happened to this person now

because of this, this person can't be like a part of me

I don't want this

I want to think about this

I don't want to think about other things now

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

The first cognitive component of this definition ('something very bad happened to me') is similar to that of *sorrow*, being "personal" (TO ME), intense (VERY bad), and past (HAPPENED). Unlike *sorrow*, however, *grief* is not a long-term state: It is recent, fresh ('something happened NOW'), and more violent ('I don't want this'). It is occasioned by a "loss," more specifically, by the loss of a person ('someone was like a part of me', 'something happened to this person now', 'because of this, this person can't be like a part of me'). At the moment, the experiencer is absorbed by thoughts of the painful event ('I want to think about this'), almost to the exclusion of everything else ('I don't want to think about other things now').

As we will see in the following, some of the components link *grief* with *despair*, to which we will turn next.

*Despair*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something very bad happened to me

I don't want this

because of this, I want to do something

I can't do anything

I can't think: something good will happen to me after now

I can't think about other things

because of this, this person feels something very bad

X feels like this

*Despair*, like *sorrow*, *grief*, and *sadness*, refers to a past event ('something bad HAPPENED'). Like *sorrow* and *grief*—but not *sadness*—it refers to something very bad and something personal ('something VERY bad happened TO ME'). Unlike *sorrow*, however, it is incompatible with resignation, and like *grief*, it necessarily implies inner resistance and rebellion against what happened ('I don't want this'). (The bad event may consist in the realization of one's failure and inability to achieve something that one very much wanted to achieve, but this, too, can be seen as a misfortune which has befallen us.)

The helplessness of *despair* ('I can't do anything') is reminiscent of the helplessness of *sorrow* and *sadness* but being linked with an active rejection of facts ('I don't want this') and with an active impulse to do something ('I want to do something'), this helplessness suggests not resignation but a terrible inner contradiction, perhaps two such contradictions: (1) 'something very bad happened to me', 'I don't want this' (but how can one want something not to have happened if it has already happened?), and (2) 'I want to do something', 'I can't do anything'.

The last component of *despair* ('I can't think about other things') spells out the experiencer's total absorption in the experience, linking it to *grief*, but even more extreme and more compulsive than that of *grief* (cf. 'I want to think about this' vs. 'I can't think about other things').

The etymology of *despair* suggests that this concept may have another aspect relating it to hope (cf. from Latin *sperare* 'to hope', *desperare* 'to lose hope'). In fact, *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* (LDOTEL, 1984) defines *despair* as either "utter loss of hope" or a "cause of hopelessness or extreme exasperation." A loss of hope is also compatible with resignation, whereas *despair* is not, so the rough gloss provided by LDOTEL cannot be right, but it does capture that aspect of *despair* which is spelled out in the component 'I can't think: something good will happen to me after now' (compare the explication of *hope*, as in "X feels hope"):

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

I can think: something good will happen to me  
 I want this  
 because of this, this person feels something good  
 X feels like this

Another concept related, in a negative way, to *hope* is *depressed*, to which we will turn next.

### *Depressed*

X feels something  
 sometimes a person thinks something like this:  
 I can think: something bad will happen to me  
 I can't think: something good will happen to me  
 I can't think: I will do something good  
 because of this, this person feels something bad  
 X feels like this

The closest relatives of *depressed* are probably *in low spirits*, *downcast* (or *cast down*), and *dejected*, and certainly not *despair*, but the element of hopelessness ('I can't think: something good will happen to me') does link it with *despair*. Unlike *dejected* or *downcast*, *depressed* (or the prototype of *depressed*) does not imply that 'something bad happened to me'. In this respect, *depressed* is closer to *in low spirits*, which doesn't need to have a specific reason either. Because the domain presently under discussion has been singled out on the basis of the component 'something bad happened/is happening', strictly speaking *depressed* doesn't belong here, and, like *hope*, has been included only for comparison. Emotion concepts referring to bad things that CAN or WILL happen have been discussed elsewhere (cf. Wierzbicka, 1990b), although the line dividing the two groups is far from clear-cut, if only because often the same concept can refer both to what is happening now and to what can happen after now.

## GOOD THINGS HAPPENING

Emotion terms referring to "good things" happening to people are much less numerous in English than those referring to "bad things" (cf. Averill, 1980). In some cases, the distinctions drawn in this area appear to be symmetrical, or almost symmetrical, to those drawn in the area of "bad things" (cf. *happy* vs. *unhappy*, *pleased* vs. *displeased*), but on the whole the two fields are far from isomorphic, as we will see when we consider the most common "positive" terms one by one.

*Joy* (e.g., X feels joy)  
 X feels something  
 sometimes a person thinks something like this:  
 something very good is happening

I want this  
 because of this, this person feels something very good  
 X feels like this

As this explication shows, *joy* is an extremely simple concept, with just two cognitive components, and without a parallel among the negative emotion terms. In particular, it is not parallel with *sadness*, in so far as *sadness* refers, prototypically, to past events (losses, deaths, separations, and so on), whereas *joy* implies that something good is happening in the present (although this can be interpreted very broadly). In addition, *sadness* includes further components, which endow it with a rather passive, resigned aura ('I can't do anything'), whereas *joy* does not include comparable components and is compatible with active manifestations (as in the case of *weeping with joy*).

One negative emotion term, which includes components almost symmetrical to those of *joy*, is *distressed* ('something bad is happening to me now', 'I don't want this'), but this concept, too, includes further components, which have no counterparts in the meaning of *joy*, and thus cannot be viewed as its exact opposite either.

In contemporary English, the word *joy* is not used very often, and neither are its derivatives, such as *joyful* and *joyous* (cf. e.g., Kučera & Francis, 1967); it is undoubtedly less common in English than words such as *sich freuen* or *radovat'sja* are in German and Russian respectively. This low frequency of *joy* may be due to the intensity of feeling that it implies, an intensity that may be at odds with the dominant attitudes of Anglo-Saxon culture favoring rather muted and controlled emotions. As mentioned earlier, the English word *happy* is much less "intense" than its closest counterparts in other European languages (*glücklich* in German, *heureux* in French, or *šťastlivyy* in Russian). *Joy* is not less intense than *Freude*, *joie*, or *radost*, but it is much less used. To account for this intuitively perceived intensity, the word *very* has been included in two components of the explication ('something VERY good is happening', 'this person feels something VERY good').

The main difference between *happy* and *joy* consists in the personal character of the former and the unspecified, possibly impersonal, character of the latter ('something good happened TO ME' vs. 'something good is happening'; see the explication of *happy* in Evidence for Definitions). In this respect, *happy* parallels *unhappy*, and *joy* parallels *sadness*. But unlike *sadness*, *joy* implies a present, rather than past, perspective ('something very good IS happening'), whereas *happy*, like *unhappy*, implies a past perspective ('something good HAPPENED to me'). Furthermore, unlike *joy*, and like *unhappy*, *happy* implies an absence of further desires ('I don't want other things'), which—depending on context—may be interpreted either in a superlative sense, as a fullness of feeling ('I am so happy...'),

or, in a somewhat diminished sense, as something akin to *contentedness*, as in “I don’t want to move—I am quite happy here.”

It appears that the adjective *happy* (as it is used in contemporary English) differs in this respect from the noun *happiness*, and that *happiness* is closer in intensity to words such as *Glück*, *bonheur*, and *šťast’e* in German, French, and Russian. To account for this greater intensity of the noun *happiness*, it might be justified to include in its explication the element ‘very’ (‘something VERY good happened to me’). But for the adjective *happy*—unlike *glücklich*, *heureux* or *šťastlivyj*—this intensity is not implied, and the inclusion of ‘very’ in its explication would not be justified (for further discussion and justification of this point, see Wierzbicka, in 1992b).

*Contented*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something good is happening to me

I wanted something like this

I don’t want other things

because of this, this person feels something good

X feels like this

*Contentedness* is an emotion that might be attributed to a well-fed cat purring sleepily in a warm spot. The cat’s well-being is in the present (the warmth, the comfort), and the cat’s presumed reaction to it is somewhat passive and moderate, rather than active, intense, or ecstatic. This is consistent with the moderate phrasing ‘something good’ rather than ‘something very good’ and with the placing of the volition in the past (‘I wanted something like this’ rather than ‘I want this’).

*Pleased*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something good happened

I wanted this

because of this, this person feels something good

X feels like this

One is *pleased* when one sees that things happen according to one’s plan; when one’s efforts bear fruit; when one’s projects become realized, or when conditions for their realization are created; and perhaps more generally, when things happen the way we have wanted them to happen.

“...And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw that it was good....” (Gen. 1: 3–4, *Holy Bible*, 1966)

I contend that when God saw that the light was good He was *pleased*—not *happy*, *joyful*, *contented*, *relieved*, *delighted* or *excited*—but *pleased*. If the

word *pleased* does sound better in this particular context, the explication proposed here would explain this.

God wasn't *happy*, because *happy* implies that 'something good happened TO ME'; He didn't feel *joy* because He was assessing the result and *joy* suggests an ongoing event and an ongoing "wanting"; and He was not *delighted*, *excited*, or *relieved* for reasons that will now be examined in turn.

*Delighted*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something very good happened now

I didn't know: this will happen

because of this, this person feels something good

X feels like this

It would sound somewhat undignified and incongruous for God to be *delighted*—because *delighted* implies something akin to surprise ('I didn't know: this will happen')—and is therefore inconsistent with God's omniscience. Furthermore, *delighted* appears to imply a lack of control (even more so than *joy*), and consequently to be inconsistent with God's omnipotence.

The absence of a volitive component in the explication (no 'I wanted this') is meant to reflect both this lack of prior expectations and the lack of control. (*Joy* doesn't imply any prior expectations either, but first, it doesn't imply any absence of expectations, and second, in *joy*, the "good events" and the "wanting" are concurrent: 'something good IS happening', 'I want this'. By contrast, in *delighted*, the good event is viewed as completed ('something good happened'), and it would be counterintuitive to say that one wants past good events, although, interestingly, it is not counterintuitive to say "No!" to a past bad event, as in *grief*.)

*Excited*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

I know: something very good will happen to me

I didn't know this before now

I want this

because of this, I want to do something

I can't think about other things

because of this, this person feels something good

X feels like this

A woman who has very much wanted to have a child may be *excited* when she finds out that she is pregnant. She may also feel *excited* after the baby's birth—thinking of various people to whom she would be showing off her baby, or of her new life as a mother. But as the baby grows, her ability to feel *excited* about his arrival must necessarily diminish. Her *happi-*

*ness* can of course persist, but probably not her *excitement*. *Excitement* suggests something new and it is necessarily forward-looking, even when it seems to be occasioned by something that has already happened (just happened).

In some ways, being *excited* means being in a somewhat abnormal state, like being *upset* is. One cannot 'think of other things', and one 'wants to do something', without necessarily being able to control one's thoughts, or to channel one's need for activity. Yet—unlike in the case of *upset*—the resulting feeling is a happy one ('this person feels something good').

### PEOPLE DOING BAD THINGS

English has a large number of emotion words referring to situations when people do things that we think they shouldn't do and that we regard as bad. Intuitively, the most basic of all these words is *anger*. There are also several words that are generally regarded as referring to special types of *anger*, especially more violent kinds (*fury*, *rage*, *wrath*, *mad*, and so on). *Anger* itself and its more violent hyponyms presuppose an active attitude to "bad actions." Other words reflect the perspective of an onlooker (*shocked*, *appalled*) or of a victim (*hurt*). Some words (e.g., *indignation*) combine the attitude of an onlooker with that of a (potential) agent. The discussion which follows is by no means exhaustive. It will focus on five concepts: *anger*, *indignation*, *shocked*, *appalled*, and *hurt*.

#### *Anger*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

this person did something bad

I don't want this

because of this, I want to do something

I would want to do something bad to this person<sup>9</sup>

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

In a prototypical *anger* situation, the emotion is triggered by a negative judgement about something that someone did ('this person did something bad'). This judgement triggers a volitional response: a refusal to accept what has happened ('I don't want this') and a desire to act ('I want to do something'). Thus, the attitude of the *angry* person is active (he or she does not accept the situation and wants to do something about it). More specifically, the desire to act takes the form of an impulse to 'do something bad' to the

<sup>9</sup> The definition of *anger* proposed here differs in one respect from that proposed in some of my other work on emotions (see References). The semantics of 'anger' requires further investigation. (E.g., does an angry person wish that 'something bad (should) happen' to the target person, or rather that the target person should 'feel bad'?)

culprit, but, unlike the case of *hatred*, this last impulse is controlled and doesn't have to be given a full rein: 'I WOULD want to do something bad to this person' (rather than 'I want'). But if the inner activity is totally extinguished then there is no more *anger*, at least in the ordinary sense of the word (as opposed to the professional jargon of psychologists, counselors, and so on).

*Indignation (indignant)*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

I know now: someone did something bad

I didn't think: someone can do something like this

I don't want this

because of this, I would want to do something

I want to say what I think about this

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

*Indignation* is similar to *anger* insofar as it, too, is based on the judgement that 'someone did something bad', and it is active rather than passive. In this case, however, the judgement is less likely to concern a specific person ('someone' rather than 'this person') and the volitional impulse is less likely to be directed against a specific person and it is also less likely to be acted upon.

For example, on reading a newspaper story about a group of highly paid public servants demanding a high pay rise and threatening to strike should their demand not be met, a person in the street is perhaps more likely to be *indignant* than to be *angry*. The exclamations that one might hear in such a situation are "How could they!" or "What arrogance!" There is no question of doing anything in response, because usually one feels unable to affect the culprits; at the most, one can write an indignant letter to a newspaper. If one could, one certainly 'WOULD want to do something' about it. But there is no purposeful 'I-WANT-to-do-something' air about it. Above all, one wants to express one's opinion about the "bad action" ('I want to say what I think about this').

Finally, *indignation* appears to be somehow related to *surprise* (and, because this surprise is caused by something bad, it is also related to *dismay* and *shock*). The thought underlying this emotion is not merely 'someone did something bad' but also "How could they have done something like this." In the explication, this element of unexpectedness is portrayed by means of the component 'I didn't think: someone can do something like this.'

*Shocked*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something happened now



I know now: someone did something bad  
 I didn't know before now: something like this can happen  
 I don't know what I can think  
 because of this, this person feels something bad  
 X feels like this

One can receive a *shock* (noun) from all sorts of events, but when one feels *shocked* (adjective) this is normally due to other people's unexpected and "bad" behavior, or the results thereof. The discovery of this behavior is sudden (although the behavior itself may have taken place earlier); and it is not only unexpected but hard to believe, as in the case of *amazement* rather than *surprise* ('I didn't know before now: something like this CAN happen'). As a result of this discovery, the experiencer is thrown into some kind of confusion, and is lost for words and thoughts: 'I don't know what I can think' (cf. *shell-shocked*). There is no impulse to do anything, as in the case of *anger* or even *indignation*. The attitude is passive, as if the experiencer were "hit" by the discovery, and temporarily, at least, "shell-shocked" into inactivity.

#### *Appalled*

X feels something  
 sometimes a person thinks something like this:  
 I know now: something bad happened  
 someone did something very bad  
 I didn't think: something like this can happen  
 I don't want this  
 because of this, I would want to do something  
 because of this, this person feels something bad  
 X feels like this

*Appalled* usually refers to something bad that happened (e.g., to someone's *appalling* living conditions) and that is seen as due to somebody's 'very bad' action (or 'very bad' failure to act). It may also refer to the 'very bad' action itself, if this action is seen as a bad event. For example, if one hears innocent-looking young children say nasty and vicious things about other people one may be *appalled*—not because their action is likely to result in 'something bad happening', but because it can be seen as something bad that has happened.

The bad action is certainly contrary to expectations and it goes beyond the limits of what one would have thought possible. In this respect, *appalled* is just like *shocked*. But *appalled* does not suggest that one is confused, or shell-shocked ('I don't know what I can think'), and it is more compatible with an impulse to counteract what has happened ('I don't want this', 'because of this, I would want to do something').

#### *Hurt*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:  
 this person did something bad to me  
 I didn't think: this person can do something like this to me  
 because of this, this person feels something bad  
 X feels like this

*Hurt*, like *anger*, is caused by a specific person, but it is even more personal than *anger*: In this case, what matters is that the other person did something bad TO ME. The bad action is unexpected, and in this sense *hurt* is analogous to *shocked*, but with *hurt*, what is really unexpected is not the action as such, but the action seen against the background of a particular relationship: I didn't think that THIS PERSON would do something like this TO ME. Paradoxically, one can hardly be *hurt* by an enemy; one is much more likely to be *hurt* by a friend. Can a stranger *hurt* us at all? This seems unlikely, but not impossible. To allow for this possibility I have refrained from including in the explication the component 'I thought: this person would want to do something good to me'. As in the case of *shocked*, an impulse to act is absent: The experiencer is very much a "patient" in this case, rather than a potential agent.

### THINKING ABOUT OURSELVES

Many emotion concepts involve thinking about ourselves and evaluating ourselves: what we have done, what we have failed to do, what other people may think about us. In this section, I will discuss seven such concepts: *remorse*, *guilt*, *shame*, *humiliation*, *embarrassment*, *pride*, and *triumph*.

#### *Remorse*

X feels something  
 sometimes a person thinks something like this:  
 I did something bad  
 I knew: this is bad  
 I can't not think: this was bad  
 I would want: I didn't do this  
 because of this, this person feels something bad  
 X feels like this

*Remorse* is definitely based on the thought 'I did something bad'; in this respect, it is related to somewhat old-fashioned concepts such as *contrition* or *penance*. It is also related to *regret*, insofar as *regret* implies the thought: 'I would want: something could happen/not happen', 'I know it can't'. But *regret* can concern present and future events, as well as past ones, whereas *remorse* is restricted to the past:

I regret very much that I won't be able to come to your party.  
 \*When I think that I won't come to your party I feel remorse.

Furthermore, *regret* can refer to events and states of affairs for which we are not responsible, and which do not involve us directly, whereas *remorse* applies only to our own (intentional) actions. For example, somebody else's illness, and its consequences, may be to us a matter of *regret*, but hardly a matter of *remorse*.

*Remorse* is like a judgement passed by our conscience, a judgement that keeps reverberating in our soul whether we want it or not. I did something bad, I knew it was bad, but I did it. It wasn't a mistake, it wasn't a faux pas, it wasn't an error of judgement. It was something for which I am fully responsible. Thinking about it is far from pleasant and I might wish to suppress these thoughts, but I can't; a secret voice in my inner self keeps repeating "It was bad," and I can't not hear it, "I can't not think about it."

#### *Guilt*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

I did something

because of this, something bad happened

because of this, I can't not think something bad about me

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

*Guilt* appears to be closely related to *remorse*, and often the two can be used almost interchangeably. For example, if a man were unfaithful to his wife he might feel either *guilt* or *remorse*. Similarly, a sinner conscious of his sin and praying for forgiveness, may be said to be feeling either *guilt* or *remorse*. But on the other hand, if I caused, unintentionally, a car accident, as a result of which someone died or was severely injured, I would feel *guilty*, even if the accident were not due to my negligence, recklessness, drunken driving, or anything like this. It is enough that I DID SOMETHING, and that something bad happened as a result. *Remorse* would not be used in this situation, because *remorse* implies that I DID SOMETHING BAD, not that I simply did something (causing something bad to happen).

Yet *guilt*, too, involves more than something like a regret that I accidentally caused something bad to happen ('I would want: this didn't happen'). *Guilt* implies that I feel somehow responsible and that in my conscience I do not find myself innocent. What happened was not just an unfortunate accident; here, as in the case of *remorse*, the voice of my conscience whispers to me that perhaps I did something bad. In any case, I cannot forget what has happened and I feel the memory of it as a burden. I cannot not think about it.

If one's old relative is very sick, and one feels one should stay with him but instead one goes to a party, and the relative dies, one may feel either *guilt* or *remorse*, depending on one's view of the situation. If it were, for example, one's father, and one thinks it was morally wrong to leave him, and if one was conscious of it at the time, then one would feel *remorse*. If it

were a distant cousin, and one doesn't think that it was one's obligation to stay with him but that it was nonetheless a "bad thing" that he died alone, then one would feel *guilt*. Perhaps I didn't do anything bad (in going to that party), but I did something, and because of this, something bad happened (the old relative died alone); the memory of it is a burden to me, I can't not think about it. This is *guilt*.

A chronically sick person may feel *guilty* at causing the family huge expenses and being a financial burden to them, but he wouldn't feel *remorse*; and even to feel *guilt* he has to see his illness as somehow linked with something that he has done or has failed to do.

A sinner may feel *guilty* before God when he thinks of how his sin has separated and alienated him from God and from other people, but when he focuses on the ugliness of the deed, rather than on its consequences, then he would probably feel *remorse*. And when he thinks of what other people might think about him because of this, he is likely to feel *shame*, to which we will turn next.

#### *Ashamed*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

everybody can know something bad about me

because of this, everybody 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

I would want: no-one will know about this

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

Typically, we are *ashamed* of something bad that we have done, and *shame* often goes hand in hand with *remorse*. But we can also be *ashamed* of something for which we are not in any way responsible; for example, one can be *ashamed* of one's parents, or of one's origin. Furthermore, we can be *ashamed* of our shortcomings, of our inability to spell correctly, of our clothes, which we deem inadequate. To account for all these different possibilities, I have phrased the first cognitive component of *shame* as 'everybody can know something bad about me' (rather than as 'I did something bad').

If there is some "shameful" truth about us that we would like to hide from other people it is because we don't want them to THINK something bad about us. The concept of *shame* is of course very much oriented to what other people may think about us (rather than merely KNOW about us), but this bad opinion, which we want to avoid, would have to be based on knowledge, and it is therefore this knowledge that we would want to prevent in the first place ('I would want: no-one will know about this'). Conse-

quently, we would want to do something; typically, however, we don't know what we could do (for further discussion of *shame*, see Dineen, 1990; Harkins, 1990).

*Humiliated*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something bad happened to me

because of this, someone can think something bad about me

I can't not think something bad about me

I don't want this

because of this, I would want to do something

I can't do anything

because of this, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

*Humiliation* is related to *shame* insofar as here, too, we are conscious of something bad that people can think about us. Nonetheless, *humiliation* is also inward-looking, not only outward-looking: In this case, it is not only other people's thoughts which matter but also our own. One might say that *humiliation* causes a lowering of self-esteem ('I can't not think something bad about me'), and this is no less painful and undesirable than any public disgrace.

Unlike *shame*, *humiliation* has to be triggered by a bad event. For example, we may be *ashamed* of our origins in general, but when someone mentions it in front of other people, in a mocking and hostile tone, we may feel *humiliated*. *Humiliation*, therefore, is linked to a specific occasion.

But this specific occasion that causes us *humiliation* cannot consist in 'something bad' that we have done ourselves: The attitude of a *humiliated* person is necessarily that of a victim ('something bad happened to me'). *Shame*, which may well be triggered by something bad that we have done ourselves, is often felt to be related to *remorse* and *guilt*, but *humiliation* is not, precisely because the experiencer does not feel in any way responsible for the bad event (despite the concomitant fall in self-esteem). Consequently, the attitude of a *humiliated* person is also more helpless: 'I can't do anything' (*humiliation*) versus 'I don't know what I can do' (*shame*).

*Embarrassed*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

something happened to me now

because of this, someone can think something about me now

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, this person feels something bad

X feels like this

*Embarrassment*, like *humiliation*, is linked to a specific occasion, in fact, even more so ('something happened to me NOW'). It is also more transient and more limited in time: After a humiliating event, we might feel something bad for a long time, even when alone at home, imagining what people are going to think about us, and thinking bad thoughts about ourselves, but *embarrassment* is short-lived, as it is focused on people's current thoughts about us, thought in our presence, not on their possible future opinion. In any case, people's thoughts about us which we would wish to avoid are not necessarily bad: For example, we may be embarrassed when praised or thanked publicly. It is the very attention focused on us which is unwelcome (and which causes a "bad feeling"), and we would like to avoid it as much as we would want to avoid people's "bad thoughts" about us in *humiliation* or in *shame*.

The attitude of someone who feels *embarrassed* is not as helpless or passive as that of someone who feels *humiliated*: As in *shame*, it seems to be 'I don't know what I can do' rather than 'I can't do anything' (as it is in *humiliation*).

#### *Pride*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

everybody can know something good about me

because of this, everybody has to think something good about me

I can think something good about me

I want this:

because of this, this person feels something good

X feels like this

We feel *proud* of our achievements, of good things that we have done, and also of good things that those close to us have done (if we emotionally identify with them). But one can also be *proud* of one's origins, or of one's beautiful singing voice, or even of one's beautiful long hair.

Generally speaking, then, we are *proud* of something good that people can know about us; we expect people to think something good about us because of this, and we think something good about ourselves.

In some ways, then, *pride* is a mirror image of *shame*; one may be *proud* of one's achievement as one may be *ashamed* of one's failures; and one may be *proud* of one's hidden talents as one may be *ashamed* of one's hidden weaknesses; one may be *proud* of one's origins, or one's family, as one may be *ashamed* of one's origins, or family. Perhaps one difference is that *shame* is more focused on other people whereas in *pride*, self-image plays a greater role. Thus, a person who feels *ashamed* has an impulse to hide from other people, but a person who feels *proud* does not necessarily have an impulse to draw other people's attention to whatever one is proud of (it may

be enough to savor it oneself). Accordingly, I have postulated for *pride* the component 'I can think something good about me' (and for *humiliation*, 'I have to think something bad about me'), whereas no such component has been postulated for *shame*.

Another possible link between *pride* and *humiliation* has to do with an implicit comparison with other people. Perhaps to be *proud* of something one has to feel superior in some respect to other people, and to be *humiliated*, to feel inferior? Perhaps both these concepts involve some thought along the lines of 'I am not like other people', or 'they (people) can't think this about other people'? In any case, it seems clear that *shame* does not imply any such comparisons.

### *Triumph*

X feels something

sometimes a person thinks something like this:

I did something very good

everybody thought: something like this cannot happen

everybody can know now: this happened

because of this, everybody has to think something very good about me

I can think something very good about me

because of this, this person feels something very good

X feels like this

*Triumph*, like *humiliation*, is linked to a specific occasion, in this case, to some outstanding and unexpected achievement ('I did something very good'). In this case, there is no implicit comparison with other people; if my achievement is seen as outstanding it is so not in terms of any comparison but in terms of expectations. It is, so to speak, an amazing achievement ('everybody thought: something like this cannot happen'). *Triumph* implies even a tinge of something like humiliation for other people: They did not believe that I could do something like this, and now they have been proved wrong ('they know now: this happened'). One *triumphs* OVER something: over obstacles, and perhaps also over other people's expectations. One's *triumph* is necessarily public: People HAVE TO (can't not) think something very good about one because of what one has done.

## CONCLUSION

This article demonstrates that emotion concepts—including the so-called basic ones, such as *anger* or *sadness*—can be defined in terms of universal semantic primitives such as 'good', 'bad', 'do', 'happen', 'know', and 'want', in terms of which all areas of meaning, in all languages, can be rigorously and revealingly portrayed.

The definitions proposed here differ in various respects from so-called classical definitions; in particular, they do not adhere to the Aristotelian model based on a *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*. Rather, they take the form of certain prototypical scripts or scenarios, formulated in terms of thoughts, wants, and feelings. These scripts, however, can be seen as formulas providing rigorous specifications of necessary and sufficient conditions (not for emotions as such, but for emotion concepts), and they do not support the idea that boundaries between emotion concepts are "fuzzy." On the contrary, the small set of universal semantic primitives employed here allows us to show that even apparent synonyms such as *sad* and *unhappy* embody different—and fully specifiable—conceptual structures, and to reveal the remarkable precision with which boundaries between concepts are drawn: even between those concepts which at first sight might appear to be identical or only "stylistically" different.<sup>10</sup> Upon closer investigation, human conceptualization of emotions reveals itself as a system of unconscious distinctions of incredible delicacy, subtlety, and precision.

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<sup>10</sup> The question of discreteness of emotion concepts must be distinguished from the question of discreteness of emotions themselves. Several students of emotions (in particular, Carroll Izard and Paul Ekman; cf. e.g. Ekman, 1989 or Izard, 1977) have claimed that emotions themselves (at least so-called basic emotions) are discrete. I do not share this view. On the contrary, I believe that it is language (through its emotion lexicon) which imposes a discrete interpretation on the nebulous "stuff" of emotional experience (cf. Wierzbicka, 1992b).



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