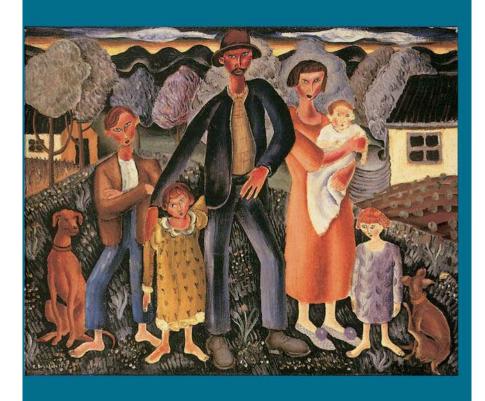# Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words

English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese

Anna Wierzbicka

Understanding Cultures
through Their Key Words

OXFORD STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS

William Bright, *General Editor*

Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words

English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese

ANNA WIERZBICKA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Canberra, Australia   A.W.
January 1996

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

Understanding Cultures through
Their Key Words

Language [is] a symbolic guide to culture.
Vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people.
[L]inguistics is of strategic importance for the methodology of
social science.

Edward Sapir

Introduction

1. Cultural analysis and linguistic semantics

In his introduction to *Vocabularies of Public Life* (1992) the well-known sociologist of culture Robert Wuthnow observes: "Perhaps more than at any other time in the present century, cultural analysis lies at the center of human sciences." A significant feature of the work in this area, according to Wuthnow, is its interdisciplinary character: "Anthropology, literary criticism, political philosophy, religious studies, cultural history, and cognitive psychology are all rich fields from which new insights can be derived." (2)

One discipline conspicuously absent from this list is linguistics. The omission is all the more striking in that Wuthnow links "the vitality and new thinking characteristic of the current sociological studies of culture [with] the depth of interest being given to questions of language" (2). This book seeks to demonstrate that cultural analysis can also gain important new insights from linguistics, in particular from linguistic semantics, and that the semantic perspective on culture is something that cultural analysis can ill afford to ignore. The relevance of semantics is not restricted to vocabulary, but perhaps in no other area is it so clearly obvious. It is therefore on vocabulary that this book concentrates.

More than sixty years on, Edward Sapir's profound insights, several of which serve as epigraphs to this book, have lost none of their validity or importance: first, that "language [is] a symbolic guide to culture" (Sapir 1949:162); second, that "vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people" (27); and, third, that "linguistics is of strategic importance for the methodology of social science" (166).

2. Words and cultures

There is a very close link between the life of a society and the lexicon of the language spoken by it. This applies in equal measure to the outer and inner aspects of life. An obvious example from the material, visible domain is that of food. It is clearly not an accident that, for example, Polish has special words for cabbage stew (*bigos*), beetroot

soup (*barszcz*), and plum jam (*powidła*), which English does not; or that English has, for example, a special word for orange (or orange-like) jam (*marmalade*), and Japanese a word for a strong alcoholic drink made from rice (*sake*). Obviously, such words can tell us something about the eating or drinking habits of the peoples in question.

The existence of language-specific names for special kinds of "things" (visible and tangible, such as food) is something that even ordinary, monolingual people are usually aware of. The existence of different customs and social institutions which have specific names in one language but not in others is also widely known. Consider, for example, the German noun *Bruderschaft*, literally 'brotherhood', which Harrap's *German and English dictionary* glosses laboriously as "(to drink) the pledge of 'brotherhood' with someone (subsequently addressing each other as 'du')." Clearly, the absence of a word for "Bruderschaft" in English has something to do with the fact that English no longer makes a distinction between an intimate/familiar "thou" and a more distant "you," and that English-speaking societies do not have a common ritual of pledging friendship through drinking.

Similarly, it is no accident that English doesn't have a word corresponding to the Russian verb *xristosovat*'sja (literally "to Christ one another"), glossed by the Oxford Russian-English dictionary as "to exchange a triple kiss (as Easter salutation)," or that it doesn't have a word corresponding to the Japanese word *miai,* referring to a formal occasion when the prospective bride and her family meet the prospective bridegroom and his family for the first time.

Most important, what applies to material culture and to social rituals and institutions applies also to people's values, ideals, and attitudes and to their ways of thinking about the world and our life in it.

A good example is provided by the untranslatable Russian word *pošlyj* (adjective) and its derivatives (nouns) *pošlost'*, *pošljak,* and *pošljačka,* to which the émigré Russian writer Vladimir Nabokov (1961) devoted many pages of detailed discussion. To quote some of Nabokov's comments:

> The Russian language is able to express by means of one pitiless word the idea of a certain widespread defect for which the other three European languages I happen to know possess no special term. (64)

> English words expressing several, although by no means all, aspects of *poshlust* [*sic*] are for instance: "cheap, sham, common, smutty, pink-and-blue, high falutin', in bad taste." (64)

According to Nabokov, however, these English words are inadequate, for first, they do not aim at unmasking, exposing, or denouncing "cheapness" of all kinds the way *pošlost'* and its cognates do; and, second, they do not have the same "absolute" implications that *pošlost'* does:

> All these however suggest merely certain false values for the detection of which no particular shrewdness is required. In fact, they tend, these words, to supply an obvious classification of values at a given period of human history; but what Russians call

poshlust is beautifully timeless and so cleverly painted all over with protective tints that its presence (in a book, in a soul, in an institution, in a thousand other places) often escapes detection. (64)

One could say, then, that the word *pošlost'* (and its cognates) both reflects and documents an acute awareness of the existence of false values and of the need to deride and deflate them; but to set out its implications systematically we would need to examine its meaning in a more analytical way than Nabokov chose to do.

The *Oxford Russian-English dictionary* assigns to *pošlyj* two glosses: "1. vulgar, common; 2. commonplace, trivial, trite, banal," but this is a far cry from glosses offered in Russian dictionaries, such as the following: "nizkij v duxovnom, nravstvennom otnošenii, melkij, ničtožnyj, zaurjadnyj," that is, "spiritually and mor- ally base, petty, worthless, mediocre" (SRJ), or "zaurjadnyj, nizkoprobnyj v duxovnom, nravstvennom otnošenii, čuždyj vysšix interesov i zaprosov," that is, "commonplace (mediocre), base (inferior, low-grade) spiritually and morally, devoid of higher interests and needs."

The semantic range of *pošlyj* hinted at by the English glosses quoted earlier is remarkably wide (extending from "banal" to "morally worthless"), but what is even more remarkable is the speaker's disgust and condemnation included in the meaning of the word *pošlyj*, and given additional weight in the derived noun *pošljak*, which writes off a person with disgust, as a spiritual nonentity "without higher interests." (The gloss offered by the *Oxford Russian-English dictionary*, "vulgar person, common person," appears to imply social prejudice, whereas in fact the condemnation is made on moral, spiritual, and, so to speak, aesthetic grounds.)

From an "Anglo" person's point of view, the whole concept may seem as exotic as those encoded in the words *uxa* ('fish soup') or *boršč* ('Russian beetroot soup'), and yet from a Russian point of view, it is a salient, habitual mode of evaluation. To quote Nabokov again: "Ever since Russia began to think, and up to the time that her mind went blank under the influence of the extraordinary regime she has been enduring for these last twenty-five years, educated, sensitive and free-minded Russians were acutely aware of the furtive and clammy touch of *poshlust*'" (64).[1]

In fact, the peculiarly Russian concept of 'pošlost' ' may well serve as an introduction to a whole system of attitudes, a glimpse of which we can obtain by contemplating some other untranslatable Russian words like *istina* (roughly 'higher truth'), *duša* ('soul,' seen as a person's spiritual, moral, and emotional core and as an internal theatre where a person's moral and emotional life goes on); *podlec* ('base person who inspires contempt'), *merzavec* ('base person who inspires disgust'), *negodjaj* ('base person who inspires indignation'; for discussion, see Wierzbicka 1992b); or *osuždat'* (roughly 'condemn'), used conversationally in sentences such as:

Ja ego osuždaju.

'I condemn him'.

Ženščiny, kak pravilo, Marusju osuždali. Mužčiny, v osnovnom, sočuvstvovali ej.

'Women, as a rule, condemned Marusya. Men tended to be sorry for her.' (Dovlatov 1986:91)

The tendency to *osuždat* ('condemn') other people in conversation, to make absolute moral judgments, and to link moral judgments with emotions, is reflected in a wide variety of Russian words and expressions, as is also the cultural emphasis on "absolutes" and "higher values" in general (cf. Wierzbicka 1992b).

But although generalizations about "absolutes," "moral passions," "extreme value judgments," and the like are often valid, they are also vague and slippery. It is one of the major goals of this book to replace such vague and slippery generalizations with careful systematic analysis of words' meanings and to replace (or flesh out) impressions with evidence based on sound methodology.

The starting point, however, is obvious to the naked eye. It lies in the old insight that the meanings of words from different languages don't match (even if they are artificially matched, faute de mieux, by the dictionaries), that they reflect and pass on ways of living and ways of thinking characteristic of a given society (or speech community) and that they provide priceless clues to the understanding of culture. No one stated this old insight better than John Locke (1959[1690]):

> A moderate skill in different languages will easily satisfy one of the truth of this, it being so obvious to observe great store of words in one language which have not any that answer them in another. Which plainly shows that those of one country, by their customs and manner of life, have found occasion to make several complex ideas, and given names to them, which others never collected into specific ideas. This could not have happened if these species were the steady workmanship of nature, and not collections made and abstracted by the mind, in order to naming [*sic*], and for the convenience of communication. The terms of our law, which are not empty sounds, will hardly find words that answer them in the Spanish or Italian, no scanty languages; much less, I think, could any one translate them into the Caribbee or Westoe tongues; and the *versura* of the Romans, or *corban* of the Jews, have no words in other languages to answer them; the reason whereof is plain, from what has been said. Nay, if we look a little more nearly into this matter, and exactly compare different languages, we shall find out, though they have words which in translations and dictionaries are supposed to answer one another, yet there is scarce one of ten amongst the names of complex ideas . . . that stands for the same precise idea which the word does that in dictionaries it is rendered by. . . . These are too sensible proofs to be doubted; and we shall find this much more so in the names of more abstract and compounded ideas, such as are the greatest part of those which make up moral discourses; whose names, when men come curiously to compare with those they are translated into, in other languages, they will find very few of them exactly to correspond in the whole extent of their significations. (48–49)

And in this century, Edward Sapir (1949) makes a similar point.

> Languages differ widely in the nature of their vocabularies. Distinctions which seem inevitable to us may be utterly ignored in languages which reflect an entirely different type of culture, while these in turn insist on distinctions which are all but unintelligible to us.
>
> Such differences of vocabulary go far beyond the names of cultural objects such as arrow point, coat of armor, or gunboat. They apply just as well to the mental world. (27).

3. Different words, different ways of thinking?

In a sense, it may seem obvious that words with special, culture-specific meanings reflect and pass on not only ways of living characteristic of a given society but also ways of thinking. For example, in Japan, people not only talk about "miai" (using the word *miai*), and practice the social ritual of *miai*, but also think about *miai* (using either the word *miai* or the concept associated with this word). For example, in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel (1986), the hero, Masuji Ono, thinks a great deal—in advance and in retrospect—about the *miai* of his younger daughter Noriko; and clearly, he thinks about it from the point of view of the conceptual category linked with the word *miai* (so much so that he retains this word in his English prose).

Clearly, the word *miai* reflects not only the existence of a certain social ritual, but also a certain way of thinking about life's important events.

Mutatis mutandis, the same applies to *pošlost'*. Certainly, objects and phenomena meriting this label exist—the Anglo-Saxon world of popular authors contains a rich array of phenomena which merit the label *pošlost'*, for example the entire genre of bodice-rippers—but to call these volumes *pošlost'* would mean to view them through the prism of a conceptual category provided by the Russian language.

If a sophisticated witness like Nabokov tells us that Russians often think about such things in terms of the conceptual category *pošlost'*, we have no reason not to believe him—given that the Russian language itself provides objective evidence for this claim in the form of the whole family of words, *pošlyj, pošlost', pošljak, pošljačka*, and *pošljatina*.

It is often debated whether words encapsulating culture-specific conceptual categories such as *pošlost'* "reflect" or "shape" ways of thinking, but the debate seems misconceived: clearly, they do both. Just as the word *miai* both reflects and encourages a certain perspective on human actions and events, so does *pošlost'*. Culture-specific words are conceptual tools that reflect a society's past experience of doing and thinking about things in certain ways; and they help to perpetuate these ways. As a society changes, these tools, too, may be gradually modified and discarded. In that sense, the outlook of a society is never wholly "determined" by its stock of conceptual tools, but it is clearly influenced by them.

Similarly, the outlook of an individual is never fully "determined" by the conceptual tools provided by his or her native language, partly because there are always alternative ways of expressing oneself. But a person's conceptual perspective on life is clearly influenced by his or her native language. Obviously, it is not an accident that Nabokov views both life and art partly in terms of *pošlost'* whereas Ishiguro does not; or that Ishiguro thinks about life in terms of concepts such as 'on' (cf. chapter 6, section 4), whereas Nabokov does not.

To people with an intimate knowledge of two (or more) different languages and cultures, it is usually self-evident that language and patterns of thought are interlinked (cf. Hunt & Benaji 1988). To question the validity of the link on the basis of an alleged lack of evidence is to misunderstand the nature of evidence which is relevant in this context. The fact that neither brain science nor computer science has anything to say about links between ways of speaking and ways of thinking and about differences in ways of thinking associated with different languages and cultures hardly proves that

such links and differences do not exist. Nonetheless, monolingual popular opinion, as well as the opinion of some cognitive scientists with little interest in languages and cultures, can be quite emphatic in their denial of the existence of such links and differences.

One particularly striking example of such a denial is provided by the recent linguistic best-seller by MIT psychologist Steven Pinker, whose book, *The language instinct* (1994), is hailed on the cover as "superb," "dazzling," and "brilliant," and praised (on the cover) by Noam Chomsky as "an extremely valuable book, very informative, and very well written." Pinker (1994:58) writes:

> As we shall see in this chapter, there is no scientific evidence that languages dramatically shape their speakers' ways of thinking. The idea that language shapes thinking seemed plausible when scientists were in the dark about how thinking works or even how to study it. Now that cognitive scientists know how to think about thinking, there is less of a temptation to equate it with language just because words are more palpable than thoughts. (58)

Pinker's book certainly offers no evidence of possible differences in thinking linked with different languages—but it is hard to see how it shows that "there is no such evidence." To begin with he never looks at any languages other than English. In general, the book is conspicuous for its complete lack of interest in other languages and other cultures, highlighted by the fact that of 517 works cited in Pinker's references, all are in English.

In his condemnation of the theory of "linguistic relativity," Pinker doesn't mince words. "It is wrong, all wrong," he declares (57). He ridicules the proposition that "the foundational categories of reality are not in the world but are imposed by one's culture (and hence can be challenged . . .)" (57), and doesn't even consider the possibility that while some categories may be innate, others may indeed be imposed by culture. He also dismisses in their entirety the views put forward by Whorf (1956) in the famous passage that deserves to be quoted once again:

> We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organise it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, *but its terms are absolutely obligatory*; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees. (213)

Undoubtedly, there is a good deal of exaggeration in this passage (as I will discuss later). Yet no one with genuine cross-cultural experience could deny that it also contains a great deal of truth.

Pinker says that "the more you examine Whorf's arguments, the less sense they

make" (60). But what matters is not whether Whorf's specific examples and analytical comments are convincing. (On this point there is now general agreement that they are not; in particular, Malotki [1983] has shown that Whorf's ideas about the Hopi language were misguided.) But Whorf's main thesis that "we dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages," and that "we cut nature up [in ways] codified in the patterns of our language," contains a profound insight which will be recognized by anybody whose experiential horizon extends significantly beyond the boundaries of his or her native language.

Pinker dismisses not only the "strong version" of Whorf's (and Sapir's) theory, which claims that "people's thoughts are determined by the categories made available by their language," but also the "weak version," which claims that "differences among languages cause differences in the thoughts of their speakers" (57).

When someone asserts that thought is independent of language, this usually means in practice that the words of his or her native language are absolutized and treated as adequate labels for supposed human "categories for thought" (cf. Lutz 1990). *The language instinct* is no exception in this respect. Pinker (1994) writes: "since mental life goes on independently of particular languages, concepts of freedom and equality will be thinkable even if they are nameless" (82). But as I will show in chapter 3, the concept of 'freedom' is not independent of particular languages (being different, for example, from the Roman concept of 'libertas' or the Russian concept of 'svoboda'). It is shaped by culture and history, and it is part of the shared heritage of the speakers of English. It is indeed an example of that "implicit agreement" of the members of one particular speech community that Whorf was talking about in the passage so emphatically dismissed by Pinker.

Whorf certainly went too far when he said that the world is presented to us "in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions," because evidence (in particular, linguistic evidence) suggests that the distinction between "who" and "what" ("someone" and "something") is universal and does not depend on the way people in this or that culture "cut nature up" (see Goddard & Wierzbicka, 1994).

But the expression "kaleidoscopic flux of impressions" was perhaps a picturesque overstatement. In fact, Whorf (1956) did not claim that ALL the "foundational categories of reality" are "imposed by one's culture." On the contrary, in some of his writings at least, he recognized the existence of a "common stock of conceptions" underlying all different languages of the world:

> The very existence of such a common stock of conceptions, possibly possessing a yet unstudied arrangement of its own, does not yet seem to be greatly appreciated; yet to me it seems to be a necessary concomitant of the communicability of ideas by language; it holds the principle of this communicability, and is in a sense the universal language to which the various specific languages give an entrance. (36)

Whorf may also have exaggerated the differences between languages and cultures and the conceptual universes associated with them, and the degree to which the terms of the agreement that holds throughout a speech community "are absolutely obligatory." We can always find a way around the canonical "terms of agreement" by using paraphrases and circumlocutions of one kind or another. But this can only be done at

a cost (by using longer, more complex, more cumbersome expressions than those which we can use relying on the habitual ways of speaking offered to us by our native language). Moreover, we can only try to avoid those conventions of which we are conscious. More often than not, the grip of people's native language on their thinking habits is so strong that they are no more aware of the conventions to which they are party than they are of the air they breathe; and when others try to draw their attention to these conventions they may even go on with a seemingly unshakable self-assurance to deny their existence. Once again the point is well illustrated by the experience of those who have had to adapt to life in a different culture and a different language, like the Polish-American writer Eva Hoffman (1989), whose "semiotic memoir" *Lost in translation: A life in a new language* should be required reading for all those professing an interest in this subject:

> "If you've never eaten a real tomato, you'll think that the plastic tomato is the real thing, and moreover, you'll be perfectly satisfied with it," I tell my friends. "It's only when you've tasted them both that you know there's a difference, even though it's almost impossible to describe." This turns out to be the most persuasive argument I have. My friends are moved by the parable of the plastic tomato. But when I try to apply it, by analogy, to the internal realm, they balk. Surely, inside our heads and souls things are more universal, the ocean of reality one and indivisible. No, I shout in every one of our arguments, no! There's a world out there; there are worlds. There are shapes of sensibility incommensurate with each other, topographies of experience one cannot guess from within one's own limited experience.
>
> I think my friends often suspect me of a perverse refusal to play along, an unaccountable desire to provoke and disturb their comfortable consensus. I suspect that the consensus is trying to colonize me and rob me of my distinctive shape and flavor. Still, I have to come to terms with it somehow. Now that I'm no longer a visitor, I can no longer ignore the terms of reality prevailing here, or sit on the margins observing the curious habits of the natives. I have to learn how to live with them, find a common ground. It is my fear that I have to yield too much of my own ground that fills me with such a passionate energy of rage. (204)

The personal insights of bilingual and bicultural insiders such as Hoffman echo analytical insights of scholars with a broad in-depth knowledge of different languages and cultures such as Sapir (1949), who wrote that in every large community "a mode of thinking, a distinctive type of reaction, gets itself established, in the course of a complex historical development, as typical, as normal" (311), and that since such distinctive habitual modes of thinking become entrenched in language, "the philosopher needs to understand language if only to protect himself against his own language habits" (165).

"People can be forgiven for overrating language," says Pinker (1994:67). They can also be forgiven for underrating it. But the conviction that one can understand human cognition, and human psychology in general, on the basis of English alone seems shortsighted, if not downright ethnocentric.

The field of emotions well illustrates the trap involved in the attempt to reach for human universals on the basis of one's native language alone. A typical scenario (where "P" stands for "psychologist" and "L" for "linguist") runs as follows:

P: Sadness and anger are universal human emotions.

L: *Sadness* and *anger* are English words, which don't have equivalents in all other languages. Why should these English words—rather than some words from language X, for which English has no equivalents—capture correctly some emotional universals?

P: It doesn't matter whether other languages have words for sadness and anger or not. Let's not deify words! I am talking about emotions, not about words.

L: Yes, but in talking about these emotions you are using culture-specific English words, and thus you are introducing an Anglo perspective on emotions into your discussion.

P: I don't think so. I am sure that people in those other cultures also experience sadness and anger, even if they don't have words for them.

L: Maybe they do experience sadness and anger, but their categorization of emotions is different from that reflected in the English lexicon. Why should the English taxonomy of emotions be a better guide to emotional universals than that embodied in some other language?

P: Let's not exaggerate the importance of language.

To show the reader that this dialogue is not fictitious, let me quote from a recent rejoinder by the distinguished psychologist Richard Lazarus (1995) directed, inter alia, at myself:

> Wierzbicka suggests that I underestimate the depth of cultural variation in emotion concepts as well as the problem of language. (255)
>
>   Words have power to influence, yet—as in the Whorfian hypotheses writ large—they cannot override the life conditions that make people sad or angry, which they can sense to some extent without words. . . .
>
>   I am suggesting, in effect, that all people experience anger, sadness, and so forth, regardless of what they call it. . . .Words are important, but we must not deify them. (259)

Unfortunately, by refusing to pay attention to words, and to semantic differences between words from different languages, scholars who take this position end up doing precisely what they wished to avoid, that is, "deifying" some words from their own native language and reifying the concepts encapsulated in them. Thus, unwittingly, they illustrate once again how powerful the grip of our native language on our thinking habits can be.

To assume that people in all cultures have the concept of 'sadness' even if they have no word for it is like assuming that people in all cultures have a concept of 'marmalade' and moreover, that this concept is somehow more relevant to them than the concept of 'plum jam', even if they happen to have a word for the latter but not the former.

In fact, the concept of 'anger' is no more universal than the Italian concept of 'rabbia' or the Russian concept of 'gnev'. (For detailed discussion of *rabbia,* see Wierzbicka 1995; for *gnev,* see Wierzbicka in press b.) To say this is not to argue against the existence of human universals but to call for a cross-linguistic perspective in trying to identify and map them.

4. Cultural elaboration and the lexicon

> Since before Boas first mentioned four Eskimo words for "snow," anthropologists
> have taken elaboration of vocabulary as an indication of the interests of particular
> cultures and of differences among them. (Hymes 1964:167)

Since Hymes wrote this, the familiar example of Eskimo words for *snow* has since
been called into question (Pullum 1991), but the validity of the general principle of
"cultural elaboration" would seem to be unassailable. Some illustrations of the
principle have not stood the test of time, but one doesn't have to be persuaded, for
example, by all of Herder's (1966[1772]) illustrations to be able to accept and admire
his basic insight:

> Each [language] in its own way is both lavish and lacking, but, to be sure, each in its
> own way. If the Arabs have so many words for stone, camel, sword, snake (things
> amongst which they live), the language of Ceylon, in accordance with the inclination
> of its people, is rich in flatteries, titles, and verbal décor. For the term "woman" it has,
> according to rank and class, twelve different names, while we discourteous Germans,
> for example, are forced in this to borrow from our neighbors. According to class, rank,
> and number, "you" is rendered in sixteen different ways, and this as well in the
> language of the journeyman as in that of the courtier. Profusion is the style of the
> language. In Siam there are eight different ways of saying "I" and "we," depending
> on whether the master speaks to the servant or the servant to the master. . . . Each one
> of these synonymies is linked to custom, character, and origin of the people; and
> everywhere the inventive human spirit reveals itself. (154–155)

Yet not only some of the illustrations but even the principle of cultural elaboration
itself has recently come under attack, although at times the attackers seem unable to
make up their minds as to whether it is false or, rather, a boring trusim.

For example, Pinker (1994) writes, with reference to Pullum (1991): "Speaking
of anthropological canards, no discussion of language and thought would be complete
without the Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax. Contrary to popular belief, the Eskimos
do not have more words for snow than do speakers of English" (64). Yet Pullum
himself ridicules the references to the reported multiplicity of Eskimo words for *snow*
in rather different terms: "Utterly boring, even if true. Only the link to those legendary,
promiscuous, blubber-gnawing hunters of the ice-packs could permit something this
trite to be presented to us for contemplation" (quoted in Pinker 1994:65).

What Pullum seems to overlook is that once the principle of cultural elaboration
has been established as valid on the basis of "boring" examples, it can then be applied
to areas whose patterning is less obvious to the naked eye. This is the reason (or at
least one of the reasons) why language can be, as Sapir put it, a guide to "social reality,"
or a guide to culture in the broad sense of the word (including ways of living, thinking,
and feeling).

If someone finds it boring that, for example, the Hanunóo language of the
Philippines has ninety different words for rice (Conklin 1957), that is their problem.
To those who do not find the comparison of cultures boring, the principle of cultural
elaboration is of fundamental importance. Since it is highly relevant to this book (in

particular, to the chapter on "friendship"), I will illustrate the principle here with some examples from Dixon's book, *The languages of Australia* (1980).

> As would be expected, Australian languages have a rich vocabulary for describing culturally important objects. . . . Australians typically have terms referring to different kinds of sand, but perhaps no unspecified lexeme corresponding to the English word *sand*. There are often many terms for referring to parts of emus and eels, among other animals; and there may be specific terms for each of the four or five stages of chrysalis that are recognised to intervene between grub and beetle. (103–104)

> There are verbs which distinguish culturally important actions—for instance, one verb will refer to 'spearing' in cases where the spear is aided into its trajectory by means of a woomera, another when it is held in the hand and the actor can see what he is aiming at, another when the spearer makes fairly random jabs in, say, thick grass in which he has seen a movement (none of these verb roots will be related in any way to the noun 'spear', unlike the situation in English). (106)

> One lexical area in which Australian languages excel concerns names for types of noise. For instance, I was able easily to record around three dozen lexemes in Yidiny referring to kinds of noise, including *dalmba* 'sound of cutting', *mida* 'the noise of a person clicking his tongue against the roof of his mouth, or the noise of an eel hitting the water', *maral* 'the noise of hands being clapped together', *nyurrugu* 'the noise of talking heard a long way off when the words cannot quite be made out', *yuyuruŋgul* 'the noise of a snake sliding through the grass', *gaŋga* 'the noise of some person approaching, e.g. the sound of his feet on leaves or through the grass, or even the sound of a walking stick being dragged along the ground'. (105)

Above all, Dixon emphasizes (with reference to Kenneth Hale's comments), the great elaboration of kinship terminology in Australian languages, and its cultural significance.

> Hale also notes that it is natural to find cultural elaboration reflected in lexical structures. Among the Warlpiri, for instance, where the algebra of kinship plays an intellectual role similar to that which mathematics plays in other parts of the world, one finds a flourishing, even vibrant, elaboration of kinship nomenclature which succeeds in enabling knowledgeable Warlpiris to articulate a truly impressive array of principles which inhere in the system as a whole—this elaboration, incidentally, goes far beyond the strictly practical needs of Warlpiri society, thereby revealing its true status as an intellectual field capable of providing considerable satisfaction to those individuals who, as they go through life, become increasingly expert in it. . . . Similar remarks apply to many other Australian tribes. (108).

It is hard to believe that anyone could indeed find these examples of cultural elaboration boringly obvious or uninteresting, but if someone does, there is really little point in arguing with them about it.

5. Word frequencies and cultures

Although elaboration of vocabulary is undoubtedly a key indicator of the specific features of cultures, it is of course not the only one. A related one that is often

overlooked is frequency of use. For example, though a particular English word can be matched in meaning with a Russian word, if the English word is very common, and the Russian rarely used (or vice versa), this difference suggests a difference in cultural salience.

It is difficult to get an accurate idea of how commonly a word is used in a given society. In fact, the task of "measuring" word frequency fully objectively is inherently impossible. The results will always be affected by the size of the corpus and the choice of the texts entered in it.

Is it really worthwhile, then, trying to compare cultures through the frequencies of words recorded in the available frequency dictionaries? For example, if we find that in the Kučera and Francis (1967) and Carroll et al. (1971) corpus of American English (henceforth K & F and C et al.) the word *if* occurs 2,461 and 2,199, respectively, per 1 million words, whereas in Zasorina's corpus of Russian the corresponding word *esli* occurs 1,979 times, can we conclude anything from this about the role of the hypothetical mode of thinking in the two cultures?

My own answer is that (in the case of *if* vs. *esli*) we cannot and that it would be naive to try, for a difference of this order could be simply due to chance.

If, on the other hand, we discover that the frequency given for the English word *homeland* is 5 (in both K & F and C et al.) whereas that of the Russian word *rodina*, glossed in dictionaries as "homeland," is 172, the situation is clearly different. To dismiss a difference of this order (roughly 1:30) would be even more foolish than to attach great importance to a difference of 20% or 50%. (With small numbers, even much greater differences in proportions may of course be purely accidental.)

In the case of *homeland*, the two English frequency dictionaries quoted here happen to give the same figure, but in many other cases the figures given by them differ considerably. For example, the word *stupid* occurs in the C et al. corpus 9 times, and in the K & F corpus 25 times; *idiot* occurs 1 time in C et al. and 4 times in K & F; and the word *fool* occurs 21 times in C et al. and 42 times in K & F. All such differences can clearly be dismissed as accidental. When, however, we compare the English figures with the Russian ones, the pattern emerging can hardly be similarly dismissed:

English (K & F/C et al.)		Russian	
fool	43/21	durak	122
stupid	25/9	glupyj	99
stupidly	2/0.4	glupo	34
idiot	4/1	idiot	29

The generalization which emerges from these figures (concerning a whole family of words) is loud and clear, and it is entirely consistent with generalizations made independently, on the basis of nonquantitative data: that Russian culture encourages "direct," sharp, undiluted value judgments, whereas Anglo culture does not.[2] It is also consistent with other statistical data, such as, for example, those concerning the use of the hyperbolic adverbs *absoljutno* 'absolutely' and *soveršenno* 'utterly/perfectly' and their English counterparts:

English (K & F/C et al.)		Russian	
absolutely	0/12	absoljutno	166
utterly	27/4	soveršenno	365
perfectly	31/27		

One further example: the use of the words *terribly* and *awfully* in English and the words *strašno* and *užasno* in Russian:

English (K & F/C et al.)		Russian	
terribly	18/9	užasno	70
awfully	10/7	strašno	159
horribly	2/1		

If one adds to this the fact that Russian also has the hyperbolic noun *užas* 'terribly' (literally 'terror/horrors'), with a high frequency of 80, and with no counterpart in English at all, the difference between the two cultures in their attitudes to "overstatement" becomes even more striking.

Similarly, if we notice that one English dictionary (K & F) records 132 occurrences of *truth*, whereas another (C et al.) records only 37, we may at first be dismayed by the difference. When we discover, however, that the figure for the closest Russian counterpart of *truth*, namely, *pravda*, is 579, we will probably be less inclined to dismiss the differences as "accidental."

Anybody who is familiar with both Anglo culture (in any of its varieties) and Russian culture knows intuitively that *rodina* is (or at least has been until recently) a common Russian word and that the concept encoded in it is culturally salient—much more so than the English word *homeland* and the concept encoded in it. It is hardly surprising that frequency data, however untrustworthy they may be in general, confirm this. Similarly, the fact that Russians tend to talk about "pravda" more commonly than speakers of English talk about "truth" can hardly come as a surprise to people familiar with both cultures. The lexical fact that Russian also has another word for something like "truth", namely, *istina*, even though the frequency of *istina* (79), unlike that of *pravda*, is not spectacularly high, provides additional evidence for the salience of this general theme in Russian culture. Without wishing to undertake a proper semantic analysis of either *pravda* or *istina* here, I might say that *istina* refers not just to "truth" but rather to something like "the ultimate truth," "the hidden truth" (cf. Mondry & Taylor 1992, Šmelev 1996), and that it occurs, characteristically, in combination with the word *iskat'* 'seek', as in the first of the following two examples:

Zolota mne ne nužno, ja išču odnoj istiny. (Alexander Pushkin, *Sceny iz rycarskix vremen*).

'I don't need gold, I only seek the truth [*istina*].'

Ja po-prežnemu verju v dobro, v istinu. (Ivan Turgenev, *Dvorjanskoe gnezdo*).

'As before, I believe in the good, in truth [*istina*].'

Istina xoroša, da i *pravda* ne xuda. (Dal', 1882)

'*Istina* is good, but *pravda* is not bad either.'

But if the characteristically Russian concept of 'istina' ("absolute truth") plays a significant role in Russian culture, the concept of 'pravda' is even more central to it, as the numerous proverbs and sayings (many of them rhymed) illustrate (the first example is from SRJ and the others from Dal' (1955[1882]):

Pravda glaza kolet.
'Truth burns (pierces) the eyes.'

Bez pravdy žit' legče, da pomirat' tjaželo.
'Without truth, it is easier to live, but hard to die.'

Vse minetsja, odna pravda ostanetsja.
'Everything will pass, only truth remains.'

Varvara mne tetka, a pravda sestra.
'Barbara is my aunt, but truth is my sister.'

Bez pravdy ne žit'e, a vyt'e.
'Without truth, life is one long howl.'

Pravda so dna morja vynosit.
'Truth will uplift you from the bottom of the sea.'

Pravda iz vody, iz ognja spasaet.
'Truth will rescue you from flood and fire.'

Za pravdu ne sudis': skin' šapku da poklonis'.
'Don't take anyone to court for truth but take off your hat and bow.'

Zavali pravdu zolotom, zatopči ee v grjaz' - vse naružu vyjdet.
'You can bury truth in gold or trample it in the mud, but it will still out.'

Xleb-sol' kušaj, a pravdu slušaj!
'Eat bread-and-salt, but heed the truth!'

This is just a small selection. The Dal' (1955[1882]) dictionary of proverbs has dozens more concerning *pravda*—and dozens of others concerning its opposites, *vrat'* and *lgat'* (some of them excusing and justifying lying as a necessary concession to life, despite the supreme splendor of the truth).

Xoroša svjataja pravda—da v ljudi ne goditsja.
'The holy truth is good—but it is not for people.

Ne vsjaku pravdu žene skazyvaj.
'Don't tell every kind of truth to your wife'.

Similarly revealing are common collocations such as, above all, *pravda-matka* 'truth-mother' and *pravda-matuška* (*matuška* being a tender, peasant-style diminutive for 'mother'), which are often used in combination with the verbs *govorit'* 'speak' or *rezat'* 'cut' (i.e. 'speak' (see Dal' 1955[1882] and 1977[1862]); or in the phrase *rezat' pravdu v glaza* 'to throw the cutting truth into a person's face':

pravdu-matku   (matušku)   govorit'   (rezat')
truth-ACC-mother-ACC   (mother-DIM-ACC)   speak   (cut)
'to speak (to cut) the mother-truth'

rezat'   pravdu   v   glaza
to cut   truth-ACC   into   eyes-ACC
'to speak the full (painful) truth to someone's face, without any attempt to soften or hedge it'

The idea of vigorously throwing the whole "cutting truth into another person's face" ("to their eyes"), combined with the view that the "full truth" must be loved, cherished, and respected like a mother, is at variance with Anglo cultural norms, which value "tact," "white lies," "minding one's own business," and so on. But as the linguistic evidence mentioned here indicates, it is part and parcel of Russian culture. The sentence:

Ljublju   pravdu-matušku.

'I love   the-truth-the-(dear-little-)mother'

cited in SSRLJ is equally revealing of the traditional Russian preoccupation with and attitude toward truth.

I am not saying that a society's cultural preoccupations and values will always be reflected in common words, and in particular in abstract nouns such as *pravda* 'truth' and *sud'ba* 'fate'. Sometimes they will be reflected, rather, in particles, interjections, set phrases, or speech formulae (cf. e.g. Pawley & Syder 1983). Some words may be culturally revealing without being very common.

Frequency is not everything, but it is important and revealing. Frequency dictionaries are only broadly indicative of cultural salience, and they can only be used as one among many sources of information about a society's cultural preoccupations. But it would be foolish to ignore them altogether. They tell part of the story. For their message to be fully understood and correctly interpreted, however, figures have to be considered in the context of an in-depth analysis of meanings.

6. Key words and core cultural values

Next to "cultural elaboration" and "frequency," another important principle linking vocabulary and culture is the principle of "key words" (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1968[1940], Williams 1976, Parkin 1982, Moeran 1989). In fact, the three principles are interrelated.

"Key words" are words which are particularly important and revealing in a given

culture. For example, in my *Semantics, culture and cognition* (Wierzbicka 1992b) I tried to show that the Russian words *sud'ba* (roughly 'fate'), *duša* (roughly 'soul'), and *toska* (roughly, 'melancholy-cum-yearning') play a particularly important role in Russian culture and offer invaluable insight into this culture.

There is no finite set of such words in a language, and there is no "objective discovery procedure" for identifying them. To show that a particular word is of special importance in a given culture, one has to make a case for it. Evidence is necessary for each such claim, of course, but evidence is one thing and a "discovery procedure" is another. For example, it would be ridiculous to criticize Ruth Benedict for the special attention she paid to the Japanese words *giri* and *on*, or Michelle Rosaldo, for her special attention to the Ilongot word *liget*, on the grounds that neither of them explained what led her to the conclusion that these words were worth focusing on, or justified her choice in terms of some general discovery procedures. What matters is whether or not Benedict's and Rosaldo's choices led them to significant insights recognized by others familiar with the cultures in question.

How can one justify the claim that a particular word is one of a culture's "key words"? To begin with, one may want to establish (with or without the help of a frequency dictionary) that the word in question is a common word, not a marginal word. One may also want to establish that the word in question (whatever its overall frequency) is very frequently used in one particular semantic domain, for example, in the domain of emotions, or in the domain of moral judgments. Furthermore, one may want to show that this word is at the center of a whole phraseological cluster, such as the following one in the case of the Russian word *duša* (cf. Wierzbicka 1992b): *na duše* ('on the soul'), *v duše* ('in the soul'), *po duše* ('after/to the soul'), *duša v dušu* ('soul to soul'), *izlit' dušu* ('to pour out one's soul'), *otvesti dušu* ('to relieve one's soul'), *otkryt' dušu* ('to open one's soul'), *duša naraspašku* ('a wide-open soul', that is, 'a communicative, sincere, frank person'), *razgovorivat' po dušam* ('to talk from soul to soul, that is, very intimately'), and so on. One may also be able to show that the proposed "key word" occurs frequently in proverbs, in sayings, in popular songs, in book titles, and so on.

But the question is not how to "prove" whether or not a particular word is one of the culture's key words, but rather to be able to say something significant and revealing about that culture by undertaking an in-depth study of some of them. If our choice of words to focus on is not "inspired" we will simply not be able to demonstrate anything of interest.

Using "key words" as an approach to the study of culture may be criticized as an "atomistic" pursuit, inferior to "holistic" approaches targeting more general cultural patterns rather than "a random selection of individual words." An objection of this kind could be valid with respect to some "studies in words" if these studies are indeed just a "random selection of individual words," viewed as isolated lexical items.

As this book hopes to show, however, a study of a culture's "key words" need not be undertaken in an old-fashioned atomistic spirit. On the contrary, some words can be studied as focal points around which entire cultural domains are organized. By exploring these focal points in depth we may be able to show the general organizing

principles which lend structure and coherence to a cultural domain as a whole, and which often have an explanatory power extending across a number of domains.

A key word such as *duša* (roughly 'soul') or *sudba* (roughly 'fate') in Russian is like one loose end which we have managed to find in a tangled ball of wool: by pulling it, we may be able to unravel a whole tangled "ball" of attitudes, values, and expectations, embodied not only in words, but also in common collocations, in set phrases, in grammatical constructions, in proverbs, and so on. For example, *sudba* leads us to other "fate-related" words such as *suždeno, smirenie, učast', žrebij*, and *rok*, to collocations such as *udary sudby* (roughly 'blows of fate') and to set phrases such as *ničego ne podelaeš'* ('you can't do anything'), to grammatical constructions such as the whole plethora of impersonal dative-cum-infinitive constructions, highly characteristic of Russian syntax, to numerous proverbs, and so on (for detailed discussion, see Wierzbicka 1992b).

Similarly, a key word such as *enryo* (roughly 'interpersonal restraint'), *on* (roughly 'debt of gratitude') and *omoiyari* (roughly 'benefactive empathy') in Japanese can lead us to the center of a whole complex of cultural values and attitudes, expressed, inter alia, in common conversational routines and revealing a whole network of-culture-specific "cultural scripts"[3] (cf. Wierzbicka in press a).

7. "Culture"—a perilous idea?

The idea that cultures can be interpreted in part through their key words may be attacked by questioning the notion of "key words" or the notion of "culture." To dwell for a moment on the second of these.

In the current debate on "culture," many voices have challenged the notion of "culture" itself, presenting it as a "perilous idea." One influential writer, Eric Wolf (1994), refers in this context to Franz Boas as someone who appreciated, ahead of his time, "the heterogeneity and the historically changing interconnectedness of cultures" and was therefore able to see cultures as "a problem and not a given":

> Just as Boas had disaggregated racial typologies and scrupulously severed consider-
> ations of race from considerations of culture, so he argued against the common
> presupposition that each culture constituted a distinctive and separate monad sui
> generis. Since all cultures could be shown to be interconnected and continuously
> exchanging materials, no culture was due to "the genius of a single people" (Boas,
> quoted in Stocking 1968:213). Since cultures were also forever breaking up and
> differentiating, it was not very useful to speak of culture in general; cultures needed
> to be studied in all their plurality and particular historicity, including their inter-
> connectedness. (5)

Wolf charges that subsequently, anthropologists failed to fully appreciate the importance, and the full implications, of these points:

> Anthropologists have . . . taken seriously Boas's point about oppositions and contra-
> dictions in culture but have done little thinking about how these heterogeneous and
> contradictory perspectives and discourses can intersect, how divergent interests and
> orientations can be made to converge, how the organization of diversity is accom-

plished. Notions of a common cultural structure underlying all this differentiation sound a bit too much like a little cultural homunculus built into everyone through the process of socialization or a Maxwell's demon capable of sorting divergent messages to create negative entropy and order. (6)

Apparently forgetting that Boas himself was a major link in the historical tradition leading from Herder and Humboldt to Sapir and Whorf, Wolf contrasts the French "universalist" tradition with the German-style emphasis on *Volksgeist* and differences between cultures:

> It had become quite common, especially in Germany, where people opposed the universalist rationalism of the French Enlightenment, to assert the uniqueness of each people and of its *Volksgeist* or "folk spirit." That spirit was believed to be anchored in passion and emotion, not in reason, and manifest in art, folklore, and language. Educated Germans especially found it attractive to accept such unifying and holistic perspectives on other cultures.... A major tradition of intellectual thought and work—extending from Wilhelm von Humboldt . . . to Ruth Benedict—has employed the guiding notion of an ideational holism at the root of culture. To this kind of approach Boas was opposed. (6)

There can be no quarrel with the statement that cultures are not separate monads but, rather, heterogeneous, historically changing, interconnected, and "continually exchanging materials." However, the fact that the emphasis on *Volksgeist* in the German philosophical tradition may have contributed, in some ways, to the strength and shape of modern German nationalism (as Wolf, among many others, suggests) should not lead us automatically to condemn and repudiate the whole "major tradition of intellectual thought and work extending from Wilhelm von Humboldt. . . to Ruth Benedict" (with an honorary exception made for Franz Boas). To do this would be a spectacular example of throwing the baby out with the bath water.

There is a difference between, on the one hand, rejecting "static culturologies," as does Regna Darnell (1994) in her commentary on Wolf's paper, and, on the other, embracing the view that cultures have no "content" at all, being no more than cross-currents of myriads of influences, as Immanuel Wallerstein (1994) seems to do in his commentary on the same paper. According to Wallerstein, Wolf clearly shows that "races, cultures, and peoples are not essences. They have no fixed contours. They have no self-evident content. Thus, we are all members of multiple, indeed myriad, 'groups'—crosscutting, overlapping, and ever-evolving" (5).

I agree that cultures are not immutable "essences" and that they have no fixed contours. I also agree that their "content" is not "self-evident." But to deny the reality of that "content" altogether and reduce us all, as cultural beings, to members of myriad "groups"—cross-cutting, overlapping, and ever evolving, means to overlook the central reality. To repeat: no one is more acutely aware of this reality than a bilingual who lives his or her life in two languages and two cultures, and the testimony of bilingual and bicultural writers is loud and clear (cf. e.g. Huston & Sebbar 1986, Hoffman 1989, Nabokov 1961, Ishiguro 1986).

"What bilinguals, what two languages?" I hear the skeptics cry. Are languages

"immutable essences with fixed contours"? Aren't they, too, cross-cutting, overlapping, and ever evolving?

Indeed they are. Yet to declare, for this reason, that the concept of "one language" (for example, French or Russian or Japanese) is a total fiction, misguided and probably reactionary, too, would be carrying theoretical extremism to the point of absurdity.

For those who do not acquire two languages by "immersion" but have to learn them by their own effort, the news that there is no such thing as "another language" might bring some relief (no need to study any further) but hardly much benefit. If people didn't believe in the existence of "other languages," then—apart from those bilingual by birth or circumstances—we would all be monolingual.

In fact, as Wallerstein (1994) himself pointed out, for different ethnic communities in a multicultural society (such as the United States), the news that the notion of "another language" is a total fiction would hardly be good news either (no more funding, perhaps, for Spanish language schools, there being no such thing as "the Spanish language"):

> Groupism is also the expression of democratic liberation, of the demand of the underdogs (those geoculturally defined as lesser breeds) for equal rights in the *polis*. This expresses itself, for example, in the call for "multiculturalism" in the United States and its equivalents elsewhere. The "universalist" response to multiculturalism—the call for "integration" of all "citizens" into a single "nation"—is of course a deeply conservative reaction, seeking to suppress the democratic demand in the name of liberalism. (5)

No language can be a better example of heterogeneity and lack of "fixed contours" than English. But does this mean that there is really no such thing as "English" and that there are only "the world's Englishes"?

There are undeniable differences between Australian English, American English, Indian English, and various other "Varieties of English Around the World" (to use the title of an important linguistic book series), but if these different "Englishes" were not perceived as different "varieties of English," then on what basis would they be grouped together as "Englishes"? Even if their presumed common core was not fully identifiable in terms of a finite list of features, "with fixed contours," would this mean that the notion of "English" has no content at all? To take a familiar example, the phenomenon of "baldness," too, has no fixed contours (for people with 30,000 hairs on their head are not bald, and neither are people with 29,999, or 29,998, and so on). This doesn't mean, however, that there are no bald people in the world, for "baldness" depends not on the number of hairs but on the overall impression that a person's scalp makes on other people.

Languages may be heterogeneous (to a varying degree) and may lack fixed contours, but this doesn't mean that they are total fictions; and it is in a clash with another language that the distinctness of a language (as a separate identity) reveals itself.

To quote another sophisticated bilingual, the semiotician Tzvetan Todorov (a Bulgarian living in Paris):

> Depuis que les sociétés humaines existent, elles entretiennent des relations mutuelles.
> Pas plus qu'on ne peut imaginer les hommes vivant d'abord isolément et ensuite

> seulement formant une société, on ne peut concevoir une culture qui n'aurait aucune relation avec les autres: l'identité naît de la (prise de conscience de la) différence. (1986:20)

> 'Since human societies have existed, they have always maintained mutual relations. As one cannot imagine people living first in isolation and only later forming a society, so one cannot conceive of a culture which wouldn't have any relations with others: identity is born out of (the awareness of) the difference.'

Coming, linguistically, from the "Balkan Sprachbund," and living in one of the main centers of an increasingly unified Europe, Todorov is well aware of the foreign influences which both Bulgarian and French have undergone in the past and are undergoing in the present:

> L'interaction constante des cultures aboutit à la formation de cultures hybrides, métissées, créolisées, et cela à tous les échelons: depuis les écrivains bilingues, en passant par les métropoles cosmopolites, et jusq'aux États plusri-culturels. (20).

> 'The constant interaction of cultures leads to the formation of cultures which are hybrid, "métisized," creolized, and this on all levels, from bilingual writers, to cosmopolitan metropolises, and even multicultural states.'

At the same time, however, being a bilingual writer himself, he is well aware of the "identity which is born out of the awareness of the difference."

For the same reason that bilingual witnesses are better placed than monolinguals to affirm the reality of different languages, bicultural witnesses are better placed than "monolingual monoculturals" to affirm the reality of different cultures, however heterogeneous and lacking in fixed contours these cultures may be.

One cannot discover the special "identity" of one's own culture (however heterogeneous it might be) until one becomes deeply and intimately acquainted with, and challenged by, another, to the point of developing a novel self. It is interesting to note, therefore, the quote from Maurice Merleau-Ponty with which Todorov closes his essay on "Le croisement des cultures":

> L'ethnologie n'est pas une spécialité définie par un objet particulier, les sociétiés "primitives"; c'est une manière de penser, celle qui s'impose quand l'objet est "autre" et exige que nous nous transformions nous-mêmes.

> 'Ethnology is not a discipline defined by one particular object of study, "primitive societies"; it is a way of thinking, which imposes itself when the object is "the other" and which requires that we should transform ourselves.'

Of course, the term *culture* is used by different writers in different senses, and before anything is affirmed about "cultures" it is good to clarify in what sense one is using this term. For my part, I find particularly fruitful the definition proposed by Clifford Geertz (1979): "The culture concept to which I adhere denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited concep-

tions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (89).

There is no need to invoke "a little cultural homunculus built into everyone through the process of socialization" (Wolf 1994) to recognize the validity of "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms . . . by means of which people communicate and develop . . . their attitudes toward life."

For example, the Russian word *sud'ba* expresses a historically transmitted conception of life by means of which Russian people communicate about people's lives and develop their attitudes toward life. The word *sud'ba* (with its high frequency in Russian speech) provides both evidence of this inherited conception and a key to its understanding.

Language—and in particular, vocabulary—is the best evidence of the reality of "culture," in the sense of a historically transmitted system of "conceptions" and "attitudes." Of course, culture is, in principle, heterogeneous and changeable, but so is language.

In the second chapter of this book I will study different conceptions of interpersonal relations historically transmitted in a few different cultures ("Anglo," Russian, Polish, and Australian) and reflected in key words. The inclusion of both "Anglo" and "Australian" cultures brings us face to face with the issue of unity and heterogeneity: Australian culture is associated with the English language, as is also "Anglo" culture in Britain, America, and elsewhere. Both the unity and diversity of "Anglo" culture are reflected in the lexicon: the unity in the pan-English word *friend*, and the diversity in the Australian-English word *mate* (with its own semantic profile and high cultural salience).

Furthermore, the changeability of culture is also reflected in the lexicon: although the word *friend* itself has remained stable in Anglo culture for several centuries, I show in chapter 2 that its meaning has changed (as reflected in its range of use, its collocations, and indeed its syntax)—in accord with independently established changes in the prevailing conceptions concerning interpersonal relations. (I am referring here not to the emergence of the new words *boyfriend* and *girlfriend*, revealing as they are of the changed patterns of living and of changed expectations and attitudes, but to the far less obvious changes in the meaning of the word *friend* as such.)

To say that "culture has no describable content" is to imply that culture cannot be taught. Languages CAN be taught, despite their lack of fixed contours, because they do have a describable core (in the form of basic vocabulary and basic rules of grammar). To say that cultures have no content and to imply thereby that they cannot be taught may seem a very liberal and enlightened position, but in fact the advocacy of this position hampers the possibility of cross-cultural understanding.[4]

Progress in cross-cultural communication will not be born out of slogans emphasizing only heterogeneity and changeability of cultures and denying the reality of different cultural norms and patterns (in the name of "deconstruction," misguided universalism, or whatever). Progress in cross-cultural understanding requires a basis in well-founded studies of different cultural norms and historically transmitted patterns of meaning.

The reality of both linguistic and cultural norms becomes evident when they are violated, as often happens in cross-cultural encounters. To deny the reality of such rules is to indulge in academic *schöngeist*-ery at the expense of persons and social groups (including, in particular, the ethnic underdogs) for whom successful cross-cultural communication is a matter of existential necessity (cf. e.g. Kataoka 1991; Darder 1995; Harkins 1994; cf. also Wierzbicka 1991a, chapter 2 and in press a).

The evidence for the reality of cultural norms and shared conceptions is provided by language and, in particular, by the meanings of words. Linguistic semantics provides a rigorous methodology for decoding such meanings and, consequently, for elucidating for cultural outsiders the tacit assumptions which are linked with them.

8. Linguistic and conceptual universals

To compare the meanings of words from different languages (such as, for example, *pravda* and *truth*, or *duša* and *soul*), we need a *tertium comparationis*, that is, a common measure. If the meanings of ALL words were-culture-specific, then cultural differences could not be explored at all. The "hypothesis of linguistic relativity" makes sense only if it is combined with a well thought out "hypothesis of linguistic universality": only well-established linguistic universals can provide a valid basis for comparing conceptual systems entrenched in different languages and for elucidating the meanings which are encoded in some languages (or language) but not in others.

The idea of conceptual universals as a possible "common measure" for comparing semantic systems is inherent, at least in embryonic form, in Leibniz's (1961[1903]) conception of "an alphabet of human thoughts":

> Although the number of ideas which can be conceived is infinite, it is possible that the number of those which can be conceived by themselves is very small; because an infinite number of anything can be expressed by combining very few elements. . . .
> The alphabet of human thoughts is the catalogue of those concepts which can be understood by themselves, and by whose combination all our other ideas are formed.
> (430)

Being a firm believer in the "psychic unity of humankind" (founded on the universal "alphabet of human thoughts"), Leibniz recommended comparative study of different languages of the world as a way to discover the "inner essence of man" and, in particular, the universal basis of human cognition (Leibniz 1981[1709]:326).

Just as Sapir and Whorf have often been chastized for emphasizing profound differences between languages and the conceptual systems associated with them, Leibniz has been chastized for emphasizing their underlying unity. For example, the distinguished British anthropologist Rodney Needham (1972) commented on Leibniz's proposal:

> This bold suggestion . . . was based on the tacit premise that the human mind was everywhere the same. . . . Methodologically, Leibniz was thus proposing a comparative analysis of the kind that Lévy-Bruhl was to put into effect almost exactly two centuries later, and even in terms that find ready agreement today; but it is not premises, not the type of research that he recommended, that have since been called into renewed question. Underlying his proposal was the conviction that human nature

was uniform and fixed, and it is precisely this idea that more recent conceptual
analyses have made difficult to accept. (220)

Thus, scholars of Pinker's orientation dismiss the study of differences between
languages as a possible source of insight into social cognition, for they identify such
an endeavor with "the idea that thought is the same thing as language" (which they
reject as an "absurdity" [Pinker 1994:57]). On the other hand, scholars of Needham's
orientation dismiss the search for linguistic universals as a possible guide to conceptual
universals because in their view there can't be any conceptual universals: to admit that
such universals could exist would mean to accept the possibility that some aspects of
"human nature" and human cognition may be constant.

What neither side seems prepared to consider is the possibility that languages, and
the ways of thinking reflected in them, exhibit both profound differences and profound
similarities; that the study of diversity can lead to the discovery of universals; that
SOME hypotheses about universals are indispensable for the study of the diversity; and
that hypotheses about conceptual universals have to be checked and revised in re-
sponse to empirical findings emerging from systematic cross-linguistic investigations.

In fact, there is no conflict between an interest in linguistic and conceptual
universals on the one hand and an interest in the diversity of language-and-culture
systems on the other. On the contrary, to achieve their purpose, these two interests
must go hand in hand.

Consider, for example, the following question: How do patterns of friendship
differ across cultures? One standard approach to this question is to use broad socio-
logical surveys based on questionnaires, in which respondents are asked, for example,
How many friends do you have? How many of them are male and how many female?
How often, on average, do you see your friends? And so on.

The procedure seems straightforward—except for one small point: if the question
is asked in Russian, or in Japanese, what word will be used for *friend*? The assumption
behind such questionnaires, or behind comparative studies based on them, is that, for
example, Russian, Japanese, and English words for "friend" can be matched. This
assumption is linguistically naive, and the results based on it are bound to present a
distorted picture of reality (cf. Wagatsuma 1977). It is even more naive to assume that
from a cognitive point of view such lack of correspondence doesn't matter, for
"thought is [not] the same thing as language" (Pinker 1994:57). We can only reach
thoughts through words (no one has yet invented another way). This is why in trying
to say something about "human thoughts" we need to weigh our words carefully and
try to anchor them in linguistic and conceptual universals.

9. "Natural semantic metalanguage": Exit from Babel

The idea that "there is no exit from language" (cf. e.g. Appignanesi and Garratt
1995:76) is not a twentieth-century invention, but it is certainly one which has been
put forward with ever greater insistence in the last few decades (and also, with an ever
greater range of interpretations). In a sense, this statement is true, in so far as everything
we say we say in some language, so that even if we "translate" our thoughts from one
language into another, we remain within the confines of a language.

In another sense, however, this idea is not true, for the existence of conceptual and linguistic universals does offer us an exit of sorts. This statement requires an explanation.

If we assume (at least as a working hypothesis) that, first, all languages have a common core (both in their lexicons and in their grammar), that, second, this common core is innate, being shaped by a prelinguistic "readiness for meaning" (cf. Bruner 1990:22), and that, third, this common core can be used as a kind of mini-language for saying whatever we want to say, then we can see that a door leading "outside language" has already opened. For although this common core can only be identified, and understood, via language, it is, in an important sense, language-independent: it is determined by an innate conceptual system, and it is independent of everything idiosyncractic in the structure of all individual languages.

To put it differently, by identifying a common core of all languages, we can carve within any language (for example, English or Japanese) a mini-language (a kind of "basic English" or "basic Japanese"), which we can then use as a metalanguage for talking about languages and cultures as if from outside them all. Since our "basic English" will be isomorphic with our "basic Japanese" (or basic anything else), from a theoretical (though of course not from a practical) point of view it will not matter which "basic language" we choose for our descriptive and explanatory formulae: each such "basic language" will be isomorphic to all the other ones, and each of them will be based directly on the prelinguistic conceptual system, presumed to be innate and universal.

If there is no "exit from language" in an absolute sense, there is, in some sense, an exit from the Babel of languages (via universal human concepts). Babel, that is, in the sense of the multiplicity of languages and the resulting confusion. But, as Derrida has discussed (1982:132–139; 1991), "confusion of tongues" is only the second meaning of the word *Babel*. In the original sense of the word, "Babel" was the tower of strength, the tower of a universal linguistic system. In this original sense of the word, natural semantic metalanguage (NSM) offers the possibility of a partial return to Babel (via universal human concepts). It presents a partial solution to what Derrida calls the "double bind" of the necessity of translation and the impossibility of translation and offers us some hope for achieving, or at least approaching (via universal human concepts), what Derrida calls "forbidden transparency, impossible univocity" (1991:253).[5]

This, then, is the fundamental assumption (or working hypothesis) on which the description and comparison of meanings in this book is based. In contrast to other approaches to meaning, the one adopted here relies neither on ad hoc formulations of meaning, given in ordinary language, nor on formulae of technical metalanguages requiring further explanation, but on paraphrases formulated in a self-explanatory "natural semantic metalanguage" carved out of natural languages and assumed to be independent of them all. Since this natural semantic metalanguage is based directly on natural language, the paraphrases formulated in it can be regarded as, essentially, self-explanatory (certainly more so than formulae of logical calculi); since, however, they do not utilize the full resources of natural languages but only their minimal shared core, they can be standardized, comparable across languages, and free of the inherent

circularity which plagues semantic descriptions using the full-blown ordinary language as its own metalanguage.

For a full explanation of the methodology of semantic description in the NSM approach and for its theoretical underpinnings, the reader must be referred to some other works in the NSM literature (cf. in particular Goddard & Wierzbicka 1994, and Wierzbicka 1996). Here, I will only highlight a few basic points: semantic primitives, lexical universals, categories and "parts of speech," the universal syntax of meaning, polysemy, "allolexy," "valency options," and the trial-and-error approach.

9.1   Semantic primitives

As colleagues and I have tried to demonstrate for almost a third of a century, the key to a rigorous yet insightful talk about meaning lies in the notion of semantic primitives (or semantic primes). One cannot define ALL words because the very idea of "defining" implies that there is not only something to be defined (a definiendum) but also something to define it with (a definiens, or rather, a set of "definienses"). The elements which can be used to define the meaning of words (or any other meanings) cannot be defined themselves; rather, they must be accepted as "indefinibilia," that is, as semantic primes, in terms of which all complex meanings can be coherently represented.

This is, then, one of the main assumptions of the semantic theory, and semantic practice, presented in this book: meaning cannot be described without a set of semantic primitives; one can purport to describe meaning by translating unknowns into unknowns (as in Blaise Pascal's mock definition, "Light is the luminary movement of luminous bodies" [1667/1954:580]), but nothing is really achieved thereby. Semantics can have an explanatory value only if (and to the extent which) it manages to "define" or explicate complex and obscure meanings in terms of simple and self-explanatory ones. If we can understand any utterances at all (someone else's or our own), it is only because these utterances are built, so to speak, out of simple elements which can be understood by themselves.

This basic point, which modern linguistics has lost sight of, was made repeatedly in the writings on language by the great thinkers of the seventeenth century, such as Descartes, Pascal, Antoine Arnauld, and Leibniz. For example, Descartes (1931[1701]) wrote:

> Further I declare that there are certain things which we render more obscure by trying to define them, because, since they are very simple and clear, we cannot know and perceive them better than by themselves. Nay, we must place in the number of those chief errors that can be committed in the sciences, the mistakes committed by those who would try to define what ought only to be conceived, and who cannot distinguish the clear from the obscure, nor discriminate between what, in order to be known, requires and deserves to be defined, from what can be best known by itself. (324).

9.2   Lexical universals

In the theory on which this book is based, it has been hypothesized, from the start, that conceptual primitives can be found through in-depth analysis of any natural language, but also that the sets of primitives identified in this way would "match," and that in

fact each such set is just one language-specific manifestation of a universal set of fundamental human concepts.

This expectation was based on the assumption that fundamental human concepts are innate, and that, if they are innate, then there is no reason to expect that they should differ from one human group to another.

Until recently, this assumption was based largely on theoretical considerations rather than on empirical studies of different languages of the world. This situation has changed, however, with the publication of *Semantic and lexical universals* (Goddard & Wierzbicka 1994, henceforth SLU), a collective volume in which conceptual primitives posited initially on the basis of a mere handful of languages were subjected to a systematic study across a wide range of languages from different families and different continents. The languages investigated in this volume included Ewe of the Niger-Congo family in West Africa (Felix Ameka), Mandarin Chinese (Hilary Chappell), Thai (Anthony Diller), Japanese (Masayuki Onishi), the Australian languages Yankunytjatjara (Cliff Goddard), Arrernte (Aranda) (Jean Harkins and David Wilkins), and Kayardild (Nicholas Evans), three Misumalpan languages of Nicaragua (Kenneth Hale), the Austronesian languages Acehnese of Indonesia (Mark Durie and colleagues), Longgu of Solomon Islands (Deborah Hill), Samoan (Ulrike Mosel), and Mangap-Mbula of Papua New Guinea (Robert Bugenhagen), the Papuan language Kalam (Andrew Pawley), and—the only European language besides English—French (Bert Peeters).

9.3   Categories and "parts of speech"

The work of the last thirty years undertaken by myself and colleagues has identified nearly sixty candidates for the status of universal semantic primitives, as outlined in the table below.

Substantives: I, YOU, SOMEONE/PERSON, SOMETHING/THING, PEOPLE, BODY

Determiners: THIS, THE SAME, OTHER

Quantifiers: ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MANY/MUCH

Attributes: GOOD, BAD, BIG, SMALL

Mental predicates: THINK, KNOW, WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR

Speech: SAY, WORD, TRUE

Actions, events, and movement: DO, HAPPEN, MOVE

Existence: (alienable) POSSESSION: THERE IS, HAVE

Life and death: LIVE/ALIVE, DIE

Logical concepts: NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF, IF... WOULD (counterfactual)

Time: WHEN/TIME, NOW, AFTER, BEFORE, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME

Space: WHERE/PLACE, HERE, UNDER, ABOVE, FAR, NEAR; SIDE, INSIDE

Intensifier, augmentor: VERY, MORE

Taxonomy, partonomy: KIND OF, PART OF

Similarity: LIKE

As the format of this outline suggests, the proposed set of primitives is not an unstructured set but, rather, a network of categories, which can be compared (somewhat metaphorically) with the parts of speech of traditional grammar. The main point is that the categories singled out (in a preliminary way) in the table above are, so to speak, both semantic and structural. They recognize certain natural semantic groupings such as, for example, time and space, and at the same time they pay attention to the combinatorial properties of the elements. Although the classification of semantic elements outlined above is by no means the only possible one, it is not arbitrary either.

What matters most from the point of view of this book is that the explications of meanings proposed here will be formulated largely (though not exclusively) in terms of the primitives listed in the above table.

Exceptions from this overall policy will be made sparingly, for the purposes of clarity and readability of the formulae. For example, in chapter 2 on "patterns of friendship," words such as *father*, *mother*, and *child* will be used as if they were semantic primitives, and the word *country* will be similarly used in chapters 3 and 4.

In addition to such consciously introduced exceptions, proposed semantic primitives will also be used in a number of different forms, or "allolexes," and with different "valency options." Both these points will be discussed briefly below, as will also the important issue of polysemy. First, however, I will discuss the grammar of the primitives, which is as important to the explanation of meaning as is the set of the primitives themselves.

9.4   The universal syntax of meaning

In what has been said so far, the emphasis was on the elements: the primitive concepts, the indefinable words. To say anything meaningful, however, we need more than words: we need sentences in which words are meaningfully put together. Similarly, to think something we need more than "concepts": we need meaningful combinations of concepts. Despite its obvious limitations, Leibniz's old metaphor of an "alphabet of human thoughts" is still quite useful here. Conceptual primitives are components which have to be combined in certain ways to be able to express meaning.

For example, the indefinable word *want* makes sense only if it is put in a certain syntactic frame, such as "I want to do this". In positing the elements I, WANT, DO, and THIS as innate and universal conceptual primitives, I am also positing certain innate and universal rules of syntax—not in the sense of some intuitively unverifiable formal syntax à la Chomsky but in the sense of intuitively verifiable patterns determining possible combinations of primitive concepts.

If one wants to explain the meaning of a sentence such as "I want to do this" to a nonnative speaker, the best one can do is to point to a semantically matching sentence in one's own language. For example, to a Russian one could offer the following equation:

I want to do this = ja xoču èto sdelat'

where *ja* matches with *I*, *xoču* (1st Sg) with *want*, *èto* with *this*, and *sdelat'* with *do*, and where the combination *ja xoču* matches with *I want*, the combination *èto sdelat'*

matches with *to do this*, and the whole combination *ja xoču eto sdelat'* matches with the whole combination *I want to do this*.

This is, then, what the universal syntax of meaning is all about: it consists in universal combinations of universal conceptual primitives. From a formal point of view, the grammar of the Russian sentence differs a great deal from that of the English one. But formal differences of this kind don't detract in the least from the overall semantic equivalence of the two sentences, which is based on the equivalence of the primitives themselves and of the rules for their combination.

Thus, the theory assumed in this book posits the existence not only of an innate and universal "lexicon of human thoughts" but also of an innate and universal "syntax of human thoughts." Taken together, these two hypotheses amount to positing something that can be called "a language of thought," or, as I called it in the title of my 1980 book, "Lingua Mentalis." It is this universal "lingua mentalis" which is being proposed, and tested, as a practical metalanguage ("NSM") for the description and comparison of meanings.

9.5   Polysemy

Polysemy is extremely widespread in natural language, and common everyday words—including indefinables—are particularly likely to be involved in it. A semantic primitive cannot be identified, therefore, simply by pointing to an indefinable word. Rather, it must be identified with reference to some illustrative sentences. For example, the English word *move* has at least two meanings, as illustrated below:

A.   I couldn't move.
B.   Her words moved me.

Of these two meanings, only (A) is proposed as a semantic primitive.

The NSM theory does not claim that for every semantic primitive there will be, in every language, a separate word—as long as the absence of a separate word for a given primitive can be convincingly explained (in a principled and coherent way) in terms of polysemy. The notion of different grammatical frames plays a particularly important role in this regard.

9.6   Allolexy

The term *allolexy* refers to the fact that the same element of meaning may be expressed in a language in two or more different ways. For just as one word (or morpheme) can be associated with two (or more) different meanings, one meaning can often have two or more different lexical exponents. By analogy with "allomorphs" and "allophones," such different exponents of the same primitive are called "allolexes" in NSM theory. For example, in English, *I* and *me* are allolexes of the same primitive concept (in Latin, EGO, in Russian, JA). Often, the allolexes of a primitive are in complementary distribution; for example, in Latin the three forms *hic, haec, hoc* are all exponents of the same primitive THIS, and the choice between them depends on the gender of the head noun. In particular, the combination with another primitive often forces the

choice of one of a set of allolexes. For example, in English, a combination of the primitives SOMEONE and ALL is realized as *everyone* or *everybody*, and a combination of ALL with SOMETHING is realized as *everything*. In these particular contexts, *-one* and *-body* can be seen as allolexes of SOMEONE, on a par with *someone*; and *-thing* can be seen as an allolex of SOMETHING, on a par with *something*.

The notion of allolexy plays a particularly important role in the NSM approach to inflectional categories. For example, the forms *am doing*, *did*, and *will do* used without temporal adjuncts convey different meanings, but when combined with the temporal adjuncts *now*, *before now*, and *after now*, as in the sentences A, B, and C below, they are in complementary distribution and can be seen as allolexes of the same primitive DO:

A. I am doing it now.
B. I did it before now (earlier).
C. I will do it after now (later).

This is why NSM sentences can be said to match, semantically, across languages, even though inflectional categories can differ considerably from language to language.

9.7 "Valency options"

The notion of "valency options" refers to different combinability patterns available to the same primitive. For example, the primitive DO can occur in the following combinations:

A. X did something.
B. X did something to person Y.
C. X did something (together) with person Y.

Obviously, "doing something to someone" or "doing something with someone" implies "doing something." Nonetheless, sentences B or C cannot be analyzed in terms of A and something else. It has to be recognized, therefore, that in each case the difference in meaning is due to the sentence as a whole, not to the predicate as such, and that the three sentences share in fact the same predicate (DO), although they realize different valency options of this predicate.

9.8 The trial and error approach

The project of devising a "Natural Semantic Metalanguage" based on natural languages and yet, in a sense, independent of them all may seem utopian. It is important to point out, therefore, that the foundations of such a metalanguage have already been laid in the work of myself and colleagues, undertaken, with this goal in mind, over the last thirty years, and that a number of successive approximations to a workable, effective NSM have already been developed and put to the test in many languages, including languages as diverse as Chinese (cf. e.g. Chappell 1983, 1986a, 1986b), Ewe (cf. Ameka 1986, 1987, 1990, 1991), Japanese (cf. Travis 1992, Hasada 1994), Malay

(Goddard 1994b), the Austronesian language Mangap-Mbula (cf. Bugenhagen 1990), and the Australian languages Yankunytjatjara (cf. Goddard 1990, 1992a, 1992b) and Arrernte (cf. Wilkins 1986; Harkins 1992).

The building of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage was, and continues to be, a gradual process. In contrast to more speculative semantic theories, the NSM theory constantly seeks confirmation—or disconfirmation—in large-scale descriptive projects. For example, in my semantic dictionary *English speech act verbs* (Wierzbicka 1987), I attempted to analyze the meaning of more than two hundred English verbs; more recently, in a series of articles on another conceptual domain (cf. e.g. Wierzbicka 1990b, 1992a, 1994), I have similarly sought to analyze at least a hundred English emotion terms (see also Ameka 1987, 1990; Goddard 1990, 1991, 1992, in press; Harkins 1994; Hasada 1994; Kornacki 1995; and others).

It is through descriptive projects of this kind that the inadequacies (as well as the strengths) of the successive versions of NSM became apparent and that future directions of development could be seen more clearly. Perhaps the most important direction of change had to do with the growing simplification and standardization of the syntax of explications, linked directly with the search for universal syntactic patterns.

The present book can be seen as another such test, since it attempts to investigate several semantic domains, in several languages, in terms of the (latest version of) the Natural Semantic Metalanguage. This time, the focus is on the interpretation of cultures (via NSM) rather than on NSM as such. This means that NSM is being tested here as a descriptive tool rather than as an abstract system, but the two aspects of the verification process are, of course, closely linked.

10. Conclusion

Wuthnow et al. note that "for all the research that has been made possible by survey techniques and quantitative analysis, little has been learned about cultural patterns" (1984:6-7), and they ask "whether it is possible to construct cultural analysis as a basic tool capable of producing verifiable social scientific knowledge at all, or whether the study of culture necessarily remains a speculative venture" (257).

This book seeks to demonstrate that cultural patterns can be studied in a verifiable and nonspeculative way on the basis of linguistic semantics, rooted in empirically established linguistic and conceptual universals. It also seeks to vindicate the importance of words, which all too often are described these days as "isolated," "fuzzy," or "static" and, consequently, rejected in favor of "taskonomies," "everyday practices," "discourse," "schemas," "prototypes," and so on. For example, Wassmann (1995) writes:

> The opening of cognitive anthropology leads to new terminology appearing in publications: 'category' and 'semantic attribute' have been superseded by 'schema', 'prototype', and 'proposition'. . . .Thus, although language remains one of the focal points, it is treated differently: no longer as a lexicon, but in everyday use as 'discourse' from which inferences must be drawn as to the intended 'message'. (173–174)

But there is no conflict between studying the meanings of words and studying everyday discourse and everyday cognition. On the contrary, as this book seeks to show, the lexicon is the clearest possible guide to everyday cognition and to the patterning of everyday discourse.

For example, basic patterns of Japanese everyday discourse and the Japanese "cultural scripts" reflected in them (cf. e.g. Wierzbicka in press a) are closely linked with the semantics of Japanese key words such as *enryo* or *wa*, discussed in chapter 6; and the basic patterns of Anglo-Australian everyday discourse (cf. Wierzbicka 1991a and 1992b) are closely linked with the semantics of Australian English words such as *whinge*, *bullshit*, and *bloody*, discussed in chapter 5. In a sense, words of this kind provide a condensed introduction to patterns of discourse and present the essence of some everyday practices in a crystalline form.

While scholars such as Wassmann underestimate the importance of the lexicon, their attitude is at least not downright hostile, but there is no shortage of real enemies of "words." For example, Simon During (1995), a Professor of English at the University of Melbourne, attacks the concept behind the *Oxford English dictionary*: "[S]trange though it may seem, words do not have fixed and true meanings at all. They are not so much rigid designators of specific meanings as flexible counters used to build up phrases or sentences. It makes sense to say that a word has a different 'meaning' whenever it is used" (9).

In a sense, it is true that words have no "fixed" meanings because the meanings of words change. But if they were always fluid and without any "true" content, they could not change either. As this book seeks to demonstrate, words do have indentifi- able, "true" meanings, the precise outlines of which can be established on an empirical basis by studying their range of use. Of course, these meanings change, but this change, too, can be studied and described only if it is understood that there is something there that can change. What is fuzzy, fluid, and lacking in clear content is not words but some recent theorizing about words, not supported, needless to say, by large-scale systematic study of the lexicon of any language.

It is an illusion to think that we will better understand cultures if we reject Sapir's fundamental insight that "vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people." On the contrary. We will better understand cultures if we try to build on this insight and to learn to study vocabulary more deeply, more rigorously, and in a broader theoretical perspective.

Lexicon as a Key to Ethno-Sociology and Cultural Psychology

Patterns of "Friendship" Across Cultures

1. "Friendship"—a human universal?

There is a widespread assumption that friendship is a universal human need and that the concept of 'friend' is a human universal. For example, Davis and Todd (1985) ask, "Why do friendships have the importance that they do?" and they comment: "The general answer provided in many theories is that not to have friends is to miss something vital for full-fledged human development. The personal relationship of friendship is thus seen as providing the context within which a number of basic human needs can be met" (21). Having characterized what they call "a paradigm case of friendship" in terms of nine basic characteristics (such as equality, enjoyment of each other's company, mutual assistance, mutual respect, and intimacy), they affirm that these characteristics jointly "characterize a relationship taken to be central in normal personal development, and thus a relationship prototypical of people's capacity to enjoy a meaningful life" (p.22).

Assumptions of this kind are ethnocentric. The concept of 'friend', and the relationship linked with it, are important in Anglo culture, but it is an illusion to think that they must have their counterparts in all other cultures and that they are somehow part of human nature.

It is possible to look at other cultures through the prism of the English words *friend* and *friendship*, of course, but if it is not recognized at the outset that these words don't necessarily have exact equivalents in other languages, and that this fact is important and revealing, the inevitable result will be that the habitual Anglo perspective on human relations will be mistaken for the human norm. For example, Blieszner and Adams (1992) write:

> From the days of the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers until now, throughout
> cultures, friends have been recognized as important sources of affection and enjoy-
> ment, understanding and support, companionship and counsel. . . . With the advent
> of empirical methods in psychology, sociology, and other disciplines comes a desire
> to understand the attributes of friends and friendship. (28)

But it is not true that "throughout cultures" "friends" have been recognized as an important social or psychological category. Taxonomies of human relations are just as culture-specific, and language-specific, as are taxonomies of emotions, or of speech acts, and the concept encoded in the present-day English word *friend* has no privileged status in them. It certainly does not represent a constant, a human universal. In fact (as we shall see), even within English the meaning of the word *friend* has changed in the course of the centuries, thus reflecting a profound change in the conceptualization of human relations and in the patterns of those relations themselves. To quote a sociological classic (Znaniecki 1965):

> Perhaps the best-known voluntary, long-lasting relations between individual men, as
> intimate as fraternal relations, but independent of hereditary bonds, are those of
> *friendship*. They have emerged in various complex collectivities, but reached their
> full development only in ancient Greece and Rome—judging from the evidence
> contained in the works of Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, the Epicureans, and Cicero.
> Friendship was seldom mentioned in medieval literature, where the basic cooperative
> relations between men were supposed to be religious; but it was revived during the
> Renaissance, and is now widely spread in the Western world. (138)

Although in the Western world, concepts encapsulated in words such as *amicus* in Latin, *friend* (in its older meaning) in English, *ami* in French, *amico* in Italian, *Freund* in German, and *przyjaciel* in Polish are indeed remarkably similar and do reflect a common cultural tradition, in this world, too, there are differences as well as similarities. The very fact that, as mentioned earlier, the meaning of the English word *friend* has changed shows that the Western cultural tradition in the patterns of human relations is less unified than it may seem at first sight.

Here as elsewhere, the crucial question is that of language. What is missing in most of the English language literature on the subject—psychological, sociological, and philosophical—is a clear realization that *friend* and *friendship* are English words, embodying concepts which are cultural artifacts of the society which created them. When this is not recognized, the meanings of the words *friend* and *friendship* tend to be either absolutized and treated as clues to human nature in general, or ignored, and treated as less important than personal judgments about human relations coming from individual informants. For example, Winstead and Derlega (1986) write: "In order to have an adequate theory of friendship, we must have a definition of friendship. Curiously, in reviewing the chapters in this volume, we find that the issue of definition was not addressed. . . . when authors refer to 'friendship,' they seem to rely on a consensual, but unspecified, idea of what friendship is" (2).

The very idea that there may be, and should be, "an adequate theory of friendship" is based on the assumption that "friendship" is something that exists independently of the English language and can be analyzed as a pre-existing, extralinguistic category.

The title of the section in which the authors put forward their proposal is: "A scientific approach to the study of friendship" (65).

This reliance on the word *friendship*, as if it were a label for a pre-existing fact, betrays an absolutization of this Anglo concept. At the same time, however, the authors fail to recognize the importance of this concept as a socio-cultural fact and want to base their "scientific approach to friendship" on some individuals' personal definitions of this concept:

> What is an appropriate starting place for a scientific study of friendship? Rather than continuing in the philosophical tradition that seeks the one definition of what constitutes the ideal friendship, we propose instead to focus on the individual: to examine individuals' personal definitions of friendship and the influence of their conceptions of friendship on the networks of their actual friendships and the social worlds within which they live. (65)

The desire to go beyond the philosophical tradition that seeks a definition of "ideal friendship" and to engage in an empirically based study of human relations is understandable, but a valid empirical investigation requires a previous conceptual clarification—and this cannot be achieved without some attention being paid to the language in which the "empirical" questions are framed.

Blieszner and Adams call, rightly, for an integration of "conceptual and empirical approaches to the analysis of friendship" and "of the friend relationship" (1992:123). It needs to be pointed out, however, that a fruitful conceptual approach must include an analysis of the words *friend* and *friendship* themselves, not as a focus for individual associations but as socio-cultural facts, and that a fruitful empirical approach must include an analysis of comparable socio-cultural facts embodied in languages other than English.

To give just one example of the kind of confusion which arises when language problems are ignored, consider the following statements from a psychology monograph (Duck 1977): "There is no Book of Common Sense, but magazines in dentists' waiting rooms seem to have a reasonable claim to embody the everyday view of life. . . . People set out consciously to make friends. . . . People like to feel that there exists some control over the selections which they make" (2, 3, 7).

Who are those "people" that Duck is talking about? The expression *to make friends* is indeed significant, and it does imply some expectation of "control," but it is a specifically English expression, without equivalents in many other European (let alone, non-European) languages; and moreover, it is an expression which emerged only in modern English, thus reflecting changes in the patterning of human relations and in their conceptualization in modern Anglo societies.

What this illustrates is that what people regard as "common sense" is bound up with a particular language, and that just as languages change and differ, so do "common-sensical" assumptions about human relations, as well as everything else. Reliance on one's native language as a source of universally valid "common-sensical" assumptions about human nature and human relations is bound to lead to ethnocentric fallacies. At the same time, ignoring the different "common-sensical" assumptions reflected in different languages is bound to lead to the obliteration of very valuable

empirical evidence concerning both similarities and differences in the patterning and conceptualization of human relations in different cultures and societies.

To illustrate. In Japanese culture, two (main) "friend-like" types of relationship are lexically distinguished: *shinyu* and *tomodachi*. Loosely speaking, *shinyu* can be glossed as 'intimate friend', whereas *tomodachi* is closer to 'friend,' *tout court*. For example, children of kindergarten age can be said to have their *tomodachi,* but not their *shinyu*—presumably because small children are not seen as persons capable (yet) of genuine "intimacy" (Rie Hasada and Hiroko Quakenbush, personal communication).

But "intimacy" is not the only difference between the two categories. Normally, *shinyu* refers (at least for older speakers) to a person of the same gender (a man's *shinyu* are normally men, and a woman's *shinyu* women), whereas *tomodachi* is not similarly restricted. This link between "intimacy" and "being a person of the same gender" is highly revealing of Japanese patterns of interpersonal relations. Yet in two (otherwise highly informative) studies of "Japanese patterns of friendship" (Atsumi 1980, 1989) the distinction between *shinyu* and *tomodachi* is not mentioned at all, and although the word *shinyu* is mentioned, *tomodachi* is not. Instead, most of the discussion relies, confusingly, on the English word *friend* and thereby loses sight of vital linguistic evidence bearing on Japanese patterns of interpersonal relations.

This is only one example. Other Japanese words referring to interpersonal relations are also very revealing. For example, there is the word *doryo*, which refers to people whom one works with, but only people of the same rank. There is also the word *nakama* (from *naka* 'inside'), which refers to a group of "friends" (one's "crowd," so to speak), and its derivatives, such as *nominakama* (roughly 'one's drinking friends/companions'), *asobinakama* (roughly 'playmates') and *shigotona-kama* ('people whom one works with'). There is also the word *yujin*, described sometimes as a more formal equivalent of *tomodachi*. Each such word reflects assumptions and values characteristic of Japanese culture and absent from the less differentiated English concept of 'friend'.

In this chapter, I will explore the conceptualization and categorization of human relations in Russian, Polish, and Anglo-Australian culture, as reflected in the meaning of certain key words (such as *druz'ja* and *tovarišči* in Russian, *koledzy* and *przyjaciele* in Polish, and *mates* in Australian English). I will also discuss the English word *friend*, showing how the meaning of this word has changed and how these changes reflect, and throw light on, changes in culture and society.

2. The changing meaning of the English word *friend*

2.1 How many friends does one have?

"Who was that?"
"Oh, just a friend. Someone I used to know"
(Brookner 1993:224)

The meaning of the English word *friend* has changed over the centuries in ways which are revealing of underlying changes in human relations. These changes could be

crudely described in various ways as "devaluation," "broadening of scope," shift from "vertical" ("in-depth") to "horizontal," from "exclusive" to "inclusive," and so on.

The general trend of these changes is aptly illustrated by the emergence of the expression *close friend*, which though difficult to date, is definitely modern. Among more than two hundred classical quotations including the word *friend* in Stevenson's (1949) *Book of quotations*, not a single one includes the expression *close friend* (and there are no examples of it in Spevack's 1968 concordance to Shakespeare's works), whereas in contemporary sources this expression appears to be the most common collocation.[1]

Broadly, the meaning of the word *friend* has "weakened," so that to achieve anything like the same "force" it is now necessary to use the expression *close friend*. Something of the old value of the word *friend* has survived in the derived noun *friendship*: whereas in the older usage, *friends* were related to one another by *friendship*, in the current usage one can have many more *friends* than *friendships*, and only "close friends" can now be said to be linked by "friendship."

It is particularly striking that the number of "friends" that a person can be expected to have has increased over time in all major Anglo societies. A hundred years ago, Henry Adams wrote (in his *Education of Henry Adams*):

One friend in a lifetime is much; two are many; three are hardly possible.

And an older quote, with a characteristic injunction:

Choose thy friends like thy books, few but choice. (James Howell, 1659).

In the highly mobile present-day American society, people often count their "friends" by the dozen. To some extent, however, the same applies to other English-speaking countries, as the following sentence from an Australian book illustrates:

One of our long-term survivors, Peter, had lost over forty friends to Aids. (King 1992:300)

Clearly, for this writer there is nothing odd about the phrase "forty friends." In fact, in modern English, even a person's "best friends" can be quite numerous. The fact that in modern English the expression *best friends* is often used in the plural is highly significant in this respect. For example, Rees' (1990) *Dictionary of popular phrases* includes the following expressions: "even your best friends," "my best friends," and "some of my best friends."

The same holds for the expression *close friends*, which (at least in American English) can now be applied to dozens of more or less casual associates. As Packard reports in his book on American mobility:

A man who had moved sixteen times in twenty-two years of marriage contended he had at least acquired "a few close, lasting friends at every stop." (1974:174)

For this man at least, it would seem that the number of his "close, lasting friends" must have been at least fifty! This brings to mind the lines by the eighteenth-century English poet William Cowper:

> She, that asks
> Her dear five hundred friends, contemns them all
> And hates their coming . . .

For many other people interviewed by Packard, the numbers of "friends" were of a similar order. In most cases these "friends" were not seen as lasting but as transient and replaceable.

> A man can become a pal for two hours with a stranger he meets on the golf course with full knowledge that he probably will never see the person again. The trick is the knack for affability. The new gregarious can be fairly indiscriminate in their selection of new friends, who become as interchangeable as cars. (188)

In fact, it might be suggested that the idea of "friendship" as a lasting, permanent relationship has given way in Anglo-American culture to the new ideal of "meeting new people." To quote one more of Packard's respondents, "the remarkable wife of a plant manager in predominantly stable Glens Falls, New York, who had moved twenty times in fifteen years of marriage, . . . explained":

> I move to a new area with the feeling I will meet new people and will have many happy experiences—and I usually do. I join groups right away and get involved. (175)

Another woman, who had moved five times in eight years of marriage, made a similar comment:

> One cannot stagnate. You have to adapt, learn to change. There are always new, interesting people, fascinating places. (174)

"New people" whom one meets in new places are very readily called "friends". For example:

> The young wife of a new teacher in high-mobile Great Falls, Montana, said that though she still did not know anyone on her block, "We have developed a number of friends through the bowling alley where we play. I bowl one afternoon a week with a lot of real nice girls and we have met several couples at the alley. The alley develops leagues which any girls can join and you are periodically put on a different team with people you don't know" [2](147).

Packard speaks in this connection of different methods of "instant plug-in" used by American people "when they move to a new community" (149).

Both the instant "plug-in" and the equally instant "plug-out" of contemporary "friends" are features quite incompatible with the classical conception of "friendship," including that reflected in the earlier English usage. This view of "friendship" as something that grows slowly and lasts "forever," is expressed in numerous traditional sayings and proverbs and in well-known works of literature. For example:

> Friendship's the wine of life; but friendship new
> Is neither strong nor pure.
> (Edward Young, *Night thoughts*)

Be courteous to all, but intimate with few, and let those few be well tried before you give them your confidence. True friendship is a plant of slow growth, and must undergo and withstand the shocks of adversity before it is entitled to the appellation. (George Washington, Letter, 1783)

It's an overcome sooth for age an' youth
    And it brooks wi' nae denial
That the dearest friends are the auldest friends,
    And the young are just on trial.
(R. L. Stevenson, "It's an overcome sooth")

Friendship is a slow grower, and never thrives unless ingrafted upon a stock of known and reciprocal merit. (Lord Chesterfield, Letter, 1747)

The traditional view of friendship as something permanent is reflected in common collocations such as *eternal friendship*, often combined, in addition, with *swearing* or *vowing*:

A sudden thought strikes me—let us swear an eternal friendship.

(J. H. Frere, "The rovers")

If I do vow a friendship, I'll perform it
To the last article.

(William Shakespeare, *Othello*).

Other common collocations involving *friendship* included the words *steady* and *constant*. For example:

A friendship that like love is warm;
A love like friendship, steady.
(Thomas Moore, "How shall I woo?")

To be capable of steady friendship and lasting love, are the two greatest proofs, not only of goodness of heart, but of strength of mind.

(William Hazlitt, "Characteristics")

Friendship is constant in all other things,
Save in the office and affairs of love.
(Shakespeare, *Much ado about nothing*)

But it is not only the word *friendship* but also the word *friend* whose common collocations reflect the old conception of friendship as something permanent. Thus, the most common collocations with the word *friend* included *faithful friend*, *steadfast friend*, and *old friend*. For example:

Above our life we love a steadfast friend.
(Chistopher Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*)

Ah, how good it feels
The hand of an old friend!
(Henry W. Longfellow, "John Endicott")

. . . There are certain signs to show
Faithful friend from faltering foe.
(Richard Barnfield, "Passionate pilgrim")

As old wood is best to burn, old horse to ride, old books to read, and old wine to drink,
so are old friends always most trusty to use.
(Leonard Wright, "Display of dutie," 1588)

Clearly, the changes in the use of the word *friend* discussed here reflect historical processes and social transformations which are not unique to Anglo societies. America in particular has gone further along a road that many other modern societies are still traveling. There is, accordingly, nothing uniquely Anglo about the general direction of the semantic changes discussed here either (although the precise shape of the modern Anglo concept of 'friend' is no doubt due also to some specific features of Anglo culture). Given the key role that the English word *friend* plays in the modern literature on interpersonal relationships, it is particularly important to understand what this word really means. If we see clearly the changes which the meaning of this word has undergone, we will be less likely to absolutize the contemporary Anglo concept of 'friend' and to treat it as some kind of natural yardstick for assessing and comparing human relations in general.

2.2   A friend in need

The idea of permanence was linked in the traditional conception of "friendship" to the expectation of help in adversity. This, too, is reflected, in countless traditional sayings, as well as in a number of common collocations. For example:

A friend in need is a friend indeed.
(Richard Graves, 1772)

He that is thy friend indeed
He will help thee in thy need.
(Richard Barnfield, "Passionate pilgrim")

A friend is never known till a man hath need.
(John Keywood, "Proverbs," 1541)

A friend is not known but in need.

(George Meriton, 1683)

Among the collocations which attest (in reverse) to the same idea, particularly noteworthy are *fair weather friend*, *summer friend*, and *false friend*. For example:

Like summer friends,

Flies of estate and sunshine.

(George Herbert, "The answer")

O summer-friendship,

Whose flattering leaves, that shadow'd us

In our prosperity, with the least gust drop off,

In the autumn of adversity!

(Philip Massinger, *The maid of honour*)

Evidence of this kind suggests that the older concept of 'friend' had a component of 'wanting to do something good for this person'. The examples adduced above may seem to suggest that this willingness to help (to do good things for) the other person was restricted to times of adversity. In fact, however, it appears that adversity was seen as a time when "friendship" was put to the test, rather than the only time when active benevolence was expected. The desire to do good things for another person is undoubtedly part of the concept of 'love' (as in "person X loves person Y") though not 'friendship'. But a "friend" in the older sense of the word was seen as a "beloved" person. Common collocations such as *sweet friends*, *loving friends*, *dearest friends*, now obsolete, certainly point in this direction, as do numerous references to "loving one's friends" (a point to which I will return later). Consequently, a desire to do good things for one's friends was (it seems) expected to be a permanent feature of the relationship and not something restricted to times of adversity. But this is not the case with the modern concept of 'friend'. For example, the numerous "friends" developed "through the bowling alley" are hardly expected to want to do good things for the speaker. Rather, friends are now expected to do things WITH us [or rather we are expected to do things with our friends]—and not so much "good things" as "fun things," things that make those involved "feel something good". These differences can be represented as follows:

A.

I want to do GOOD THINGS FOR this person

when I think about this person, I feel something very good

B.

I want to do THINGS WITH this person

when I am with this person, I feel something good

In nonformulaic English, one could say (roughly) that "friends" in the older sense of the word were expected to be loved, whereas "friends" in the modern sense are expected to be liked, and it is love, not liking, which may need to be put to the test (especially if the permanence of the relationship is not ensured by marriage or family bonds).

2.3 "Bosom friends" vs. "congenial fellowship friends"

Another important aspect of the older concept of 'friend' which has gone is that of special trust and a willingness to confide in the other person. This feature of the old *friend* is reflected in the old expression *bosom friend*, whose ironic echo resounds in the modern *bosom buddy*. Compare also the following nineteenth-century definitions of a "friend":

> A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. (Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Friendship")

> What is a friend? I will tell you. It is a person with whom you dare to be yourself. (Frank Crane, "A definition of friendship")

Compare also the definition of a "true friend" offered by William Penn, a Quaker and founder of Pennsylvania:

> A true friend unbosoms freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a friend unchangeably. ("Fruites of solitude")

And George Herbert's injunction:

> Thy friend put in thy bosom: wear his eyes
>
> Still in thy heart, that he may see what's there. ("The church-porch")

The willingness to confide in a "friend" is of course related to the number of people whom one is willing to regard as "friends." As we have seen, one may now have even fifty "friends" (in the current sense of the word), but one can hardly "confide" in fifty people. A friend who is seen as someone with whom I may dare to be sincere and to whom I can truly open my heart implies a rather exclusive relationship. The willingness to confide and the exclusive relationship can be represented as follows:

> I think about this person like this:
>   I want this person to know what I think
>   I want this person to know what I feel
>   I don't want many other people to know these things
> I know this person thinks the same about me

2.4 A "circle of friends" vs. an exclusive relationship

The shift in perspective on human relations discussed throughout this chapter is reflected, in a particularly revealing way, in the syntactic construction "a friend of mine," in which, as it would seem, the word *friend* has started to appear more and more often in modern usage.

While some examples of this construction can be found in sixteenth-century English (e.g., in Shakespeare: "Dar'st thou resolve to kill a friend of mine"), it appears

that the use of this construction increased considerably in modern times and that at the same time the use of *friend* with a definite possessive (e.g. "my friend") has decreased. Although I can't offer at this stage any serious statistical evidence for this contention, it is worth noting that according to Spevack's (1968) concordance of the complete works of Shakespeare, the construction "a friend of mine (his, N's etc.)" occurs 11 times for 452 occurrences of *friend*, whereas, for example, in Piper's (1970) concordance of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* it occurs 5 times for 17 occurrences of *friend*. In proportion to the corpus as a whole, this would be 2.5% for Shakespeare and 30% for Fitzgerald (or, roughly, one in forty for Shakespeare, and one in three for Fitzgerald). Although the two corpora are of course vastly different in size, a difference of this magnitude is nonetheless suggestive.

Furthermore, in the SEU (Survey of English Usage) Corpus of English (based on 1 million running words), all the occurrences of *friend* (excluding the parliamentary title "my honourable friend") amount to 80, of which 21, that is 24%, are instances of the "a friend of mine" construction. (If the 28 cases of "honourable friend" are included, the proportion of this construction is still very high: 18%.)

What is more, we can note some qualitative changes in the use of the "my friend" construction which support the hypothesis that the use of the alternative construction "a friend of mine" has extended over time. To illustrate these changes, I will quote a few sentences from Shakespeare's works where the use of "my friend" (or "mine friend") rather than "a friend of mine" sounds now archaic.

1 The knave is mine honest friend, sir.
(Second Part of *King Henry IV*, 5. 1.50)

2 For I shall never hold that man my friend whose tongue shall ask me for a penny
        cost.
(First Part of King Henry IV, 1.3.90)

3 There is not a man I met but doth salute me
As if I were their well-acquainted friend.
(*Comedy of errors*, 3.2)

4 Ye're welcome, my fair guests: that noble lady
Or gentleman that is not freely merry
Is not my friend: this, to confirm my welcome [Drinks].
And to you all, good health.
(*King Henry VIII*, 1.4,37)

In present-day English, one would normally say "he is a friend of mine" rather than "he is my friend" (unless under heavy emphasis, e.g. "I can't do it to him, he is MY FRIEND"); at the same time, sentences such as "he is my son" or "he is my brother" are perfectly natural. In fact, in current usage the phrase "my friend"—in contrast to "a friend of mine"—has started to be used as a euphemism for "boyfriend" or "girlfriend," as in the following example:

Dolly had a man friend. Quite possibly, although this seemed grotesque to me, Dolly was in love. All became clear when she said, in response to my mother's question as to how she had managed the journey to our flat—always a hazardous undertaking, as they both professed to believe—"My friend drove me over. Actually he owns the firm. You could say he was combining business with pleasure. Harry," she added, with deep satisfaction. "Harry Dean. A dear friend." (Brookner 1994:120)

If not used euphemistically, the phrase *my friend* tends to be, in current usage, accompanied at first by a specifier, as in the following example:

After tea my friend Marigold Chance might receive a visit. . . . She had been my friend since we had started school together at the age of four. . . . (Brookner 1994: 78)

But in older usage, phrases such as *my friend, thy friend,* or *your friend,* definite but without a specifier and non-anaphoric, were used commonly, as the phrases *my brother* or *my son* are still used in present-day English.

In current usage, it seems that a "friend" is usually introduced into conversation in one of four ways, all of which suggest a possible multiplicity of "friends": (1) with a possessive and a specifier ("my friend Marigold"); (2) in the partitive construction ("one of my friends"); (3) with an indefinite article ("a friend"); (4) in the highly characteristic "a friend of mine" construction, whose semantics deserves special attention.

To appreciate the full implication of this construction, consider the following phrases:

A. A friend (relative, servant) of mine was married in this church/is buried in this cemetery.
B. ?A brother of mine was married in this church/is buried in this cemetery.
C. ?A son of mine was married in this church/is buried in this cemetery.
D. ?A husband of mine was married in this church/is buried in this cemetery.

Phrases such as *a brother of mine, a son of mine,* and *a husband of mine* sound off-hand, ironic, and patronizing. The reason is, presumably, that the construction itself implies a whole class of persons, all equivalent to one another because all are related in the same way to a central figure. The phrase *a friend of mine* suggests that at the moment of speech the speaker is not interested in that particular friend's individuality, but views him exclusively as a member of a category, a category defined in terms of its relation to the speaker. It implies that I have, or could have, many friends (a "circle of friends"), and that I view myself as a figure at the center of that circle of friends, unilaterally related to them all.

The construction "an X of mine (yours, his etc.)" is particularly suited to collective categories, where all members can be viewed as equidistanced with respect to the person who provides the point of reference:

a colleague of mine
a student of mine
a fan of his

In the case of brothers or children, the construction "one of my Xs" is more appropriate because brothers or children differ importantly in their relative position with respect to the referent person and can hardly be regarded as "equidistant" to that person. As for inanimate objects, the following phrases sound perfectly natural (if somewhat dismissive):

> an old paper of mine
> an old photograph of mine

—more natural than, for example:

> ?an old toy of mine
> ?an old typewriter of mine
> ?an old camera of mine

The construction appears to require nouns which can be seen as inherently relational (e.g., papers written by me, or photographs showing me), and it sounds best if the assumption that there can be many items "like this" is self-explanatory. Roughly, then:

> an X of mine =
>   I can have many Xs
>   it doesn't matter how many I have
>   I think about all such Xs in the same way
>   this is one of such Xs

Jespersen (1965) says that "if I say *he is a friend of mine*, I need not at all imply that I have more than one friend. ... To express the partitive sense we have the unambiguous expression *one of my friends*." What Jespersen says is correct, of course, but it doesn't explain why it sounds strange to say "he is a husband of mine," or even, "he is a son of mine."

It is true that one can say (in jest) "that husband of mine" or "that son of mine." but this only adds to the mystery. Jespersen argues (against Kruisinga) that in a phrase such as *that husband of yours*, "the disdainful tinge is caused by the application of the pronoun *that* to your husband, and not by the combination *of yours*," and he supports his argument with the example, "Where is that beautiful ring of yours?" But again, this doesn't explain why the sentences "he is a husband of mine" and even "he is a son of mine" sound odd.

In my view, to explain all these facts we need to hypothesize that in modern English the construction "an X of mine (his, etc.)" has a meaning of its own, not a "partitive" one but, so to speak, an "indefinite-indifferentive one," roughly along the lines of "it doesn't matter how many there are, it doesn't matter which one." In particular, this hypothesis accounts for the differences in acceptability between the sentences:

> He is a friend of mine.
> ? He is a son of mine.
> ? He is a husband of mine.

The related construction "this X of mine" (or "that X of mine") is different, in one respect, from "an X of mine," of course, but it, too, carries the semantic component which can be stated, very roughly, as 'it doesn't matter how many Xs I have'. This component explains why the phrase *this friend of mine* sounds neither odd nor playful, whereas the phrases *this husband of mine* and *this son of mine* do. (If one has several sons, the phrase *this son* doesn't sound at all playful [e.g. Was it this son who married an actress?] but *this son of mine* does.)

I am suggesting, then, that in the older usage *friend* tended to be seen as an individual related to us in a special way (rather like a brother, or a child), whereas in the current usage *friends* tend to be seen as a multiplicity of people related in an analogous way to a central figure (as reflected in the common expression *circle of friends*).[3]

This suggestion is further supported by the fact that the range of adjectives with which the word *friend*, and, in particular, *friends* (in the plural), can co-occur has apparently changed. Thus, among 445 quoted occurrences of *friends* in Shakespeare (cf. Spevack 1969), we find numerous examples of *sweet friends*, *good friends*, *gentle friends*, *loving friends*, *faithful friends*, *dearest friends*, *true-hearted friends*, *worthy friends*, *noble friends*, *precious friends*, *loyal friends*, and so on (as well as a few *false friends*, *hollow-hearted friends*, and even *monstrous friends*)—that is, evaluative terms, focusing on the personal qualities of the "friends" and the value of the relationship. What seems to be missing entirely are descriptive phrases specifying one particular category of people, such as, in contemporary literature, "my American friends" (Brookner 1994: 215), "my feminist friends" (Brookner 1994:217), or the following phrases listed in a concordance to the works of Bernard Shaw (Bevan 1971): "his English capitalist friends," "my clerical friends," "the American's American friends," "our Christian friends," and "English friends" (in the context "an Irishman may have . . ."). In these phrases, the adjective describes a kind of "people," not a kind of "person," and does not refer to the nature of the relationship.

What such phrases, apparently quite common in twentieth-century English, suggest is, first of all, a large number of possible "friends," who can even be classified into various collective categories on the basis of some (non-evaluative) characteristic. They also imply that the relation in question is not personal and exclusive but rather ranges over a whole class of people, defined by a single nonpersonal characteristic.

2.5   Making friends

The new "plural" orientation of *friends* is reflected, among other things, in the modern expression *to make friends*, with the object in the plural and without a further complement (e.g. "to make lots of friends," "to make new friends," "an opportunity to meet people and make friends.")

In modern usage, the set phrase *to make friends* (with the object in the plural, and with no further complements) seems to have largely supplanted the earlier expression *to find a friend* (not a set phrase). One obvious difference between the two phrases has to do with the voluntary character of the more recent, and the involuntary character of the older one. "Making friends" appears to be seen as an art and a skill which requires an active attitude to one's life and one's relationship with other people. (It is

similar in this respect to the less idiomatic "winning friends," as in the title of a modern super-bestseller: *How to win friends and influence people* [Carnegie 1982(1936)]). But the expression *to make friends* implies also, significantly, a desire to have a multiplicity of friends, since while one can "make friends" one can hardly "make a friend." For example:

> I have made eight new friends (Bernard Shaw, *Good King Charles's golden days*)

> ... in the teens it takes longer to make friends (?a friend) than in the grammar school years. (Packard 1974:237)

In the older usage (with the verb *to find*), both the singular (*a friend*) and the plural (*friends*) were perfectly natural. For example:

> Faithful friends are hard to find. (Richard Barnfield, "Passionate pilgrim")

> A friend may be often found and lost ... (Samuel Johnson)

But in the characteristic modern usage (with the verb *to make*), the object is normally in the plural.

The combination of the verb *make* with the noun *friends* has been possible for a long time (for example, it occurs in Shakespeare) but apparently not in the construction discussed here ("to make friends," with no further complement). For example, in Shakespeare's works one can find examples with a double object or with a prepositional complement, such as the following ones:

> ... for those you make friends
> And give your hearts to, when they once perceive
> The least rub in your fortunes, fall away ...
> (*Henry VIII*)

> the poor advanc'd makes friends of enemies
> (*Hamlet*)

> Get posts and letters, and make friends with speed
> (*Henry IV*, Part Two)

However, among the 490 examples of the use of the word *friends* (in the plural) recorded in Spevack's (1969) concordance of Shakespeare's works, there is not one example of the construction "to make friends" (without a second complement) discussed here. This confirms the intuitive impression that this construction has probably appeared, and in any case spread, in modern times.

The common present-day expression *to make friends*, normally with a plural object (and without an explicit or implicit *with*-phrase), clearly reflects the modern outlook, which stresses an active forging of a whole multiplicity of associations with other people.

It should be added that in the older usage there was also another common collocation, next to *finding a friend*, namely, *choosing a friend* (or *choosing one's friends*). For example:

> Be slow in choosing a friend, slower in changing. (Benjamin Franklin)

> True happiness
> Consists not in the multitude of friends.
> But in the worth and choice.
> (Ben Jonson, "Cynthia's revels")

> Choose for your friend him who is wise and good, secret and just, ingenious and honest . . . . (Jeremy Taylor, *Discourse of friendship*)

The idea of deliberately "choosing a friend" may seem almost diametrically opposed to that of "finding a friend," and indeed closer to that of (voluntarily) "making friends." In fact, however, "finding" and "choosing" may represent two different aspects of the same process (one is lucky if one can "find" someone whom one can "choose" as a friend). On the other hand, "choosing" and "making" friends, while both voluntary processes, differ significantly in the attitudes implied. "Choosing friends" implies that one expects a small number and requires special qualities; "making friends" implies a desire for a large number (as in any "production process"), and a somewhat indiscriminate approach (the more the better), no special, individual qualities being necessarily required, and no exclusive relationship being envisaged. The expression *to make friends* is similar in this respect to the words *popular* and *popularity*, which point to a related cultural ideal of, roughly speaking, being liked by many people (cf. Stewart 1972:58).

2.6 "True friends" vs. "close friends"

One could object that since in the older usage "true friends" were sometimes distinguished from "friends," this distinction was in fact analogous to the modern distinction between "friends" and "close friends," so that the difference between the older and more recent approach to "friendship" is not as sharp as I have been suggesting. I would argue, however, that the similarity between the notions of 'true friends' and 'close friends' is more apparent than real.

First, a few quotes illustrating the use of the expressions *true friends* and *true friendship*:

> To have the greatest blessing, a true friend.
> (Philip Massinger, "Parliament of love")

> They are rich who have true friends.
> (Thomas Fuller, "Gnomologia")

> A true friend is forever a friend.
> (George Macdonald, "Marquis of Lossie")

The expressions *true friend* and *true friendship* implied an observed "corruption" and "misuse" of *friend* and *friendship* as such and were meant to defend them against that corruption, or, as Ralph Waldo Emerson put it, "prostitution":

> I hate the prostitution of the name of friendship to signify modish and worldly alliances. ("Friendship")

Indeed, there is plenty of evidence showing that in its earlier use the words *friend* and *friendship* without any modifiers were loaded with meaning going far beyond that associated with the modern Anglo *friends*. The expression *true friend* was clearly intended to defend that meaning rather than to draw a distinction between *friend* and some other category of human relations. The very high expectations linked with a *friend* as such can be illustrated with the following quotations:

> Life without a friend is death without a witness.
> (George Herbert, "Jacula Prudentum")

> The best elixir is a friend.
> (William Sommerville, "The hip")

> Love is only chatter,
> Friends are all that matter.
> (Gelett Burgess, "Willy and the lady")

> O friend, my bosom said,
> Through thee alone the sky is arched,
> Through thee the rose is red.
> (Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Friendship")

> A friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature.
> (Emerson, "Friendship")

> A Father's a Treasure; a Brother a Comfort; a Friend is both.
> (Benjamin Franklin)

Similarly, *friendship* (without modifiers) was linked with expectations which could hardly have been greater with respect to *true friendship*. For example:

> Friendship is a union of spirit, a marriage of hearts, and the bond thereof virtue.
> (William Penn, "Fruites of solitude")

And on the value of "friendship":

> Friendship is the gift of the gods, and the most precious boon to man. (Benjamin Disraeli, speech, 1855)

Thus, a *true friend* was not seen as a special kind of *friend* (particularly close and valued), but simply as a *friend* in the most literal (rather than a "corrupted") sense of the word.

By contrast, the modern expression *close friend* is not meant to have the same range of referents as the word *friend*; it is indeed intended to stand for a different category of people, linked to the target person by a different kind of relationship. The notion that not all "friends" can be regarded as "close friends" does not represent (from the speaker's point of view) an attack on the current use of the word *friend*; rather, it establishes a new category including a special subset of the broader category. "Close friends" are "friends" with an additional feature of being "closely" related to the target person—the implication being that "friends" as such are not expected to be necessarily closely related to that person. Nonliteral, "corrupted" use is still seen as possible, but now it is the use of the expression *close friend* which may be scrutinized from this point of view rather than the use of *friend* itself (since one does not necessarily expect "friends" as such to amount to very much in the present usage).

For example, Packard (1974) repeatedly uses the phrase "really close friends," as if *close friends* was not sufficient to exclude weak and superficial relationships. For both Packard and his informants, the number of expected "close friends" clearly exceeds what used to be regarded as the "normal" number of "friends." For example, one of the questions in Packard's questionnaire was formulated as follows: "How many of the people that you regard as close friends (as distinguished from casual acquaintances and friends) live within five miles of your home?"

To this, the median answer in the high stability town Glens Falls was 6, whereas in the high mobility town of Azusa it was 3. (In both Glens Falls and Azusa the respondents wished that the numbers in question should be higher.) But if most people in Glen Falls have about six "close friends" living within five miles of their home, one wonders how many "close friends" they have altogether. It would seem that even if the man mentioned earlier who had moved sixteen times in twenty two years of marriage and had acquired "a few close, lasting friends at every stop" could be regarded as somewhat exceptional, neither Packard nor his respondents would regard a number of ten, fifteen, or twenty "close friends" as incongruous.

2.7 Friends and enemies

In the older usage of the word *friend*, this word was very frequently paired with the word *enemy* (or *foe*), and the two were clearly treated as opposites. For example:

Friends are as dangerous as enemies.
(Thomas De Quincey, "Essays")

You and I were long friends; you are now my enemy and I am
Yours, Benjamin Franklin. (Letter to William Strahan)

Do good to thy friend to keep him, to thy enemy to gain him.
(Benjamin Franklin, "Poor Richard's almanac")

He will never have true friends who is afraid of making enemies.
(William Hazlitt, "Characteristics")

When fails our dearest friend,
There may be refuge with our direct foe.
(J. S. Knowles, "The wife")

If I have not a friend, God send me an enemy that I may hear of my faults.
(Benjamin Whichcote, "Sermons")

In modern usage, however, *friends* and *enemies* are no longer treated as opposites. For one thing, if most people are expected to have "friends," it is not the case that most people are expected to have enemies. Moreover, even those people who can be expected to have "enemies," would not be expected to have a whole "circle of enemies," as they might have a "circle of friends." Most importantly, however, even for those people who do have a comparable number of "friends" and of "enemies," the two groups no longer seem to be related to the person in question in an analogous manner. This is not to say that there is no semantic relation between the two concepts anymore. There is—but presumably this relation is now restricted to a single contrast. Even this contrast is not based on full symmetry, as the following portrayal of the relevant components (not the whole meanings) shows:

This person is a friend. =>
    when I am with this person, I feel something good
    I think this person feels the same

This person is an enemy. =>
    when I think about this person, I feel something bad
    I think this person feels the same

As we have seen, however, in the older usage of *friend* (*friend₁*) this word referred also to a volition, a will directed toward the other person (good will). Since the word *enemy* also included a volitional component (ill will), the link between the two concepts was much stronger, and it is understandable why they should have been so readily perceived as opposites:

This person is my friend₁. =>
I want to do good things for this person
this person wants to do the same for me

This person is my enemy. =>
this person wants to do bad things to me
I want to do the same to this person

In the present-day usage, however, *friend* no longer includes a component of 'good will', whereas *enemy* still does include the component of "ill will." This explains why the two words have drifted apart. I do not think that *friend* and *enemy* have ever been perfectly symmetrical opposites, because *friend* included other components, such as the willingness to reveal thoughts and feelings to the other person, which were not matched by anything in the semantic structure of *enemy*. Nonetheless, the two concepts were sufficiently similar to be felt as quasi-opposites—much more so than they are now.

2.8 "Dear friends" vs. "enjoyable friends"

In the older usage, one of the most common collocations involving *friend* was *dear friend* or *dearest friend*. For example:

Farewell, dear friend, that smile, that harmless wit
No more shall gladden our domestic hearth.
(H. F. Cary, "Epitaph on Charles Lamb")

But Fate ordains the dearest friends must part.
(Edward Young, "Love of fame")

In present-day English, however, the collocation *dear friend* or *dearest friend* is marginal or even archaic. It is true that it is still possible to address a group of people as "dear friends," but normally only older people would now describe a person as a "dear friend," let alone "dearest friend." Two other common collocations, *good friend* and *best friend*, have survived, but *dear friend* has largely gone out of use (as have also *sweet friend*, and many others, cited earlier from Shakespeare).

To account for this fact, I would posit a weakening (as well as reshaping) of the emotional component of the word *friend*, which can be represented as a shift from 'very good' to 'good':

*friend*₁
when I think about this person, I feel something VERY GOOD

*friend*₂
when I am with this person, I feel something GOOD

In the older usage, *friends* were mutually bound by something much closer to love than *friends* in the present-day sense of the word. To illustrate:

So, if I live or die to serve my friend,
'Tis for my love—'tis for my friend alone,
And not for any rate that friendship bears
In heaven or on earth.
(George Eliot, "Spanish gypsy").

Having some friends whom he loves dearly,
And no lack of foes, whom he laughs at sincerely.
(Robert Southey, "Robert the rhymer's account of himself")

Thus, in the old usage of the word *friend*, people were usually expected to "love" their friends, but this is certainly not the case now. The distinction between 'feeling something very good' and 'feeling something good' is meant to account partly for this difference.

In addition to the difference of degree, however ('something very good' vs. 'something good') there is an additional qualitative difference, which, roughly speaking, can be linked with the contrast between "affection" and "enjoyment." As mentioned earlier, in the older English literature, people often "loved" their friends, or felt and thought of them as "dear" and "dearest." By contrast, in contemporary English

(as mentioned earlier), people are more likely to talk about "friends" in terms of "enjoyment," "pleasure," and "fun."

This difference between "dear" friends and "enjoyable" friends can be represented as a shift from (habitual) affectionate thoughts to (occasional) pleasurable company:

*friend*₁
when I THINK ABOUT this person, I feel something very good

*friend*₂
when I AM WITH this person, I feel something good

For example, the sociologist Allan (1979), who bases his analysis of the category "friend" on accounts given by a large number of respondents, writes: "An assumption entailed in the idea that friendship is voluntary is that it is a relationship based on enjoyment. A friend is someone with whom one enjoys spending time and sharing activities" (41).

This is, of course, quite different from the classical (Roman) conception of *amicitia,* which (as presented by Cicero in "De Amicitia") was held to be based on mutual good will and affection, and which was seen as implying the duty of correcting a friend *(amicus)* when necessary. The older English concept of *friend*₁ was clearly closer to that Roman conception than the concept encoded in the modern English *friend*₂.

2.9 Summary and conclusion

The two meanings of the word *friend*, the earlier one *(friend*₁*)* and the present-day one *(friend*₂*)*, can be portrayed as follows:

*friend*₁
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
(b)   I know this person very well
(c)   I think good things about this person
(d)   I want this person to know what I think
(e)   I want this person to know what I feel
(f)   I don't want many other people to know these things
(g)   I want to do good things for this person
(h)   I know this person thinks the same about me
(i)   when I think about this person, I feel something very good
(j)   I think like this about this person

*friend*₂
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
(b)   I know this person well
(c)   I want to be with this person often
(d)   I want to do things with this person often
(e)   when I am with this person, I feel something good
(f)   I think this person thinks the same about me
(g) I think like this about this person

In the explication of *friend₁*, component (b) refers to personal knowledge which goes beyond a mere acquaintanceship or familiarity, component (c) refers to some valued personal qualities, components (d) and (e) define a dimension of something like "confidence" and "intimacy," (f) alludes to a "special" and rather "exclusive" relationship, (g) to "good will" and "willingness to help," (h) and (j) refer to "reciprocity," and (i) to something like "affection."

In the explication of *friend₂*, component (b) refers to a more superficial knowledge, components (c) and (d) substitute something like "gregariousness" for "confidence" and "intimacy" of *friend₁*, whereas (e) refers to the "fun-to-be-with" aspects of the modern "friends," replacing the earlier loving attitude (roughly speaking, a shift from "loving" to "liking").

Samuel Johnson in his *Dictionary of the English language* (1968[1755]) offered the following definition of the English word *friend* (as used at the time): "friend—one joined to another in mutual benevolence and intimacy." The striking differences between this definition and those offered by modern American dictionaries highlight the changes in the meaning of *friend* discussed in this chapter.

For example, *The American Heritage dictionary of the English language* distinguishes two meanings of *friend* (presumably, an earlier one and a more recent one) and offers the following two definitions: (1) a person whom one knows, likes, and trusts; (2) a person whom one knows; an acquaintance. The first of these two definitions is "thinner" in its implications than Johnson's (with no "benevolence" or "intimacy" being mentioned, and with an emphasis on mere "liking"), whereas the second one is so "thin" that hardly anything of the earlier meaning of *friend* is left in it at all.

Webster's third requires a bit more than just "knowing a person," but it offers the following characteristic comment, which explicitly denies "intimacy" and emphasizes "liking" and "pleasure": "*friend* applies to a person one has regarded with liking and a degree of respect and has known for a time in a pleasurable relationship neither notably intimate nor dependent wholly on business or professional ties."

The *New shorter Oxford English dictionary* (1993), too, reflects the change in the meaning of *friend* in the way it glosses phrases such as *be* or *keep friends (with)* ("be on good or intimate terms [with]"), and *make friends (with)* ("get on good or intimate terms with"). There is a big difference between being on "good" and on "intimate" terms with someone. Clearly, in older English more than "good terms" was required, but in present-day English being on "good terms" may be enough.

Certainly, the older sense of the word *friend* lingers on, to some extent, in the collective memory of native speakers of English, who are familiar with it through English literature and other cultural echoes from the past. If the modern expression *close friend* reflects the change in the meaning of *friend* (because in the past, all "friends" were "close friends," so no such distinction was necessary), the modern expression *real friend* expresses a sense of continuity in this word's meaning (because it seems to acknowledge, and even celebrate, the older sense of *friend* as a valid meaning of this word, and perhaps even as its "real" meaning, in contrast to the "loose" and "watered down" modern usage). For example, Allan (1979) writes:

To claim that some friends are allowed to discover the 'real self' more than others is to say that some are trusted more than others. This is the major difference between those people labelled 'real' or 'true' friends and the remainder. 'Real' friends appear to be trusted totally and can be relied on to protect their friend's interests. . . . Other friends not labelled real or true ones are likely to be treated more cautiously, . . . They are people who are found interesting and with whom one is sociable, but they are not people to whom one reveals innermost fears or worries.

As Suttles (1970) develops at length, an important way in which people become friends, and 'everyday' friends 'real' friends, is by breaking the normal 'rules of public propriety'. This serves to reveal the 'real self' and for the friends symbolises the strength of their friendship bond. (70)

Allan talks about the expressions *true friend* and *real friend* as if they were interchangeable, but in fact they are not. A *true friend* is an older expression, which, as we have seen, tried to protect the seriousness of the word *friend*. A *real friend* seems to be a predominantly modern expression (for example, there are no instances of it in Spevack's concordances of Shakespeare's works), which is closer in meaning to a *close friend* than to the older *true friend*, but which, nonetheless, recalls and acknowledges the older usage. In particular, Suttles' (1970) distinction between "everyday friends" and "real friends" highlights the fact that "real friends" tend now to be seen as a special category of "friends," distinct from the category of "everyday friends." This is not quite the same as "true friends" in the older usage.

Thus, semantic history of the word *friend* confirms the validity of Tocqueville's observation that "democracy does not create strong attachments between man and man, but it does put their ordinary relations on an easier footing" (quoted in Bellah et al. 1985:117). As Bellah et al. comment, with special reference to America, "in the mobile and egalitarian society of the United States, people could meet more easily and their intercourse was more open, but the ties between them were more likely to be casual and transient" (117). The change was visible by the 1830s, when Tocqueville wrote his classic work, and the trend has continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. "'Friendliness' became almost compulsory as a means of arguing the difficulties of these interactions, while friendship in the classical sense became more and more difficult." (Bellah et al. 1985:118). In a similar vein, Stewart (1972) comments:

Personal relationships among Americans are numerous and are marked by friendliness and informality; however, Americans rarely form deep and lasting friendships. Friends and membership groups change easily as the American shifts status or locale; consequently, his social life lacks both permanence and depth. (49)

The generalized "friend" of Americans, standing for anyone from a passing acquaintance to a life-time intimate, is maintained according to activities. . . . But these patterns of friendship among Americans . . . do not imply a distrust of people. They signify more often the American reluctance to becoming deeply involved with other persons. In circumstances where a foreigner might turn to a friend for help, support or solace, the American will tend to search for the professional, preferring not to inconvenience his friends. (54)

What Bellah et al. mean by "friendship in the classical sense" involves not only a "deep involvement" with another person, and a "deep commitment" to him or her, but also the concept of a common good served by the relationship. I am not convinced that this latter idea was part of the older meaning of the word *friend* as such, although it was indeed part of the conception of "friendship" developed by the philosophers of antiquity and shared by many thinkers and writers in modern times. In more recent times, the ideal of a deep and lasting "friendship" involving strong attachments and an exclusive intimacy has given way to the ideal of "friendliness" and of "making friends" in the sense of extensive but limited and transient relationships is certainly corroborated by linguistic evidence. This applies not only to America but, to some extent, to the English-speaking world as a whole, although the fact that, for example, in Australia, another crucially important way of talking about human relations has developed, in addition to the idiom of "friends" (see below, section on "Mate"), shows that in this area, as in others, "Anglo culture" is far from monolithic.

As mentioned earlier, changes in the patterning and conceptualization of human relations, similar to those whose reflection in one fragment of the English language has been discussed here, have also occurred in other Western societies, during their gradual entry into "modern civilization." To what precise extent these changes have found their expression in other European languages is a matter for further investigation.

3. Patterns of "friendship" in Russian culture

Western, especially American, students of Russia are often struck by Russian patterns of "friendship" (I put the word "friendship" in quotation marks because this word itself embodies a certain categorization and interpretation of human relations, which, as we shall see, is different from that reflected in the Russian language).

For example, Hedrick Smith (1976), in his justly acclaimed *The Russians*, wrote:

> Their [the Russians'] social circles are usually narrower than those of Westerners, especially Americans, who put such great stock in popularity, but relations between Russians are usually more intense, more demanding, more enduring and often more rewarding.
>
> I knew of a couple sent off to Cuba for a two-year assignment, and another family put up their teenage son in an already crowded two-room apartment. When Bella Akhmadulina, the poet, married for the third time, she and her husband were broke, and their friends bought them an entire apartment full of furniture. Let a dissident intellectual get in trouble and real friends will loyally take the terrible political risk of going to his rescue. . . .
>
> They commit themselves to only a few, but cherish those. Within the trusted circle, there is an intensity in Russian relationships that Westerners find both exhilarating and exhausting. When they finally open up, Russians are looking for a soul-brother, not a mere conversational partner. They want someone to whom they can pour out their hearts, share their miseries, tell about family problems or difficulties with a lover or mistress, to ease the pain of life or to indulge in endless philosophical windmill tilting. As a journalist I sometimes found it ticklish because Russians want a total commitment from a friend. (108–110)

Like many other foreign commentators, Smith linked Russians' need for intense and enduring friendships with the conditions of life under the Soviet regime.

> Precisely because their public lives are so supervised and because they cannot afford to be open and candid with most people, Russians invest their friendships with enormous importance. Many of them, in cities at least, are only-children whose closest friends come to take the place of missing brothers and sisters. They will visit with each other almost daily, like members of the family. . . .
>
> Friendships are not only compensation for the cold impersonality of public life but a vital source of personal identity.
>
> "Friends are the one thing we have which are all our own," a mathematician confided. "They are the one part of our life where we can make our own choice completely for ourselves. We cannot do that in politics, religion, literature, work. Always, someone above influences our choice. But not with friends. We make that choice for ourselves."
>
> The choice, among intellectuals at least, is made with special care, for one essential ingredient of Russian friendships is the political test of trust. This gives them special depth and commitment. Americans, spared the violence of Soviet political purges, repressions and constant pressures for ideological conformity, do not have to make the vital, acute judgment of sorting out true friend from devious informer. Soviets must make that judgment often, and always unerringly.
>
> . . . For safety's sake, Russians hold each other at bay. "We don't want personal relations with that many other people," one man said bluntly.

But while the conditions of life in Soviet Russia have no doubt contributed to the exceptional importance of deep friendship, especially in milder times after Stalin's death, in other ways the dangers involved in trusting anybody at all outside the immediate family have had the opposite effect. In the chapter entitled "Russian character and the Soviet system" of their well-known study, *How the Soviet system works*, Bauer, Inkeles and Kluckhohn (1956) have commented on this reverse side of the coin:

> Virtually all aspects of the Soviet regime's pattern of operation seem calculated to interfere with the satisfaction of the Russians' need for affiliation. The breakup of the old village community and its replacement by the more formal bureaucratic and impersonal collective farm is perhaps the most outstanding example, but it is only one of many. The disruption and subordination of the traditional family group, the church, the independent professional associations, and the trade unions are other cases in point. Additional effects of a marked kind are created by the strains which the regime has created on friendship relations between two or more individuals, by its persistent programs of political surveillance, its encouragement and elaboration of the process of denunciation, and its assumptions about mutual responsibility for the failings of particular individuals. (139)

The authors concluded, nonetheless, that Russians (and this applies to Soviet times as well) "value warm interpersonal relations to an unusually high degree":

> The need for free, uninhibited social intercourse is both frustrated and accentuated under Soviet conditions. The desire to express pent-up feelings impels the individual to seek out confidants. The fear of talking makes him less likely to talk. The result is

not a cessation of confidences, but rather the development of techniques of screening
and assessing people in order to decide how much they can be trusted. (110)

The importance of deep friendship in the Russian hierarchy of values, reflected
in the Russian literature and, as we will see, in the Russian language, is also confirmed
by sociological surveys. For example, as noted by the Soviet sociologist Kon
(1987:133–134), a survey conducted in America in the early 1970s showed that
Americans ranked friendship tenth on a list of values, whereas in a comparable survey
in Russia friendship was ranked sixth. Other studies conducted in the late 1970s and
early 1980s found that in Russia young people responding to questions about their
goals in life put friendship in the first place (cf. Shlapentokh 1989:174–176).

Intensive interpersonal bonds of the kind described by Smith and others no doubt
continue patterns which were part and parcel of Russian culture in pre-Soviet times
as well, and it has even been suggested that the political climate in tsarist Russia may
have been a contributing factor, too; but generally speaking, all observers appear to
agree that these patterns were intensified by the conditions of life under the Soviet
regime. Shlapentokh (1984) comments on this as follows:

> The virtual cult of friendship in tsarist Russia strongly supports the notion that a lack
> of political freedom can greatly contribute to the development and preservation of
> close human relationships. The glorification of friendship in the poetry of Pushkin is
> linked directly to political opposition against tsarist despotism and the yearning for
> freedom. . . . The Soviet system, which has increased the political pressures on its
> citizens, has only enhanced the significance of friendship in Russia. (219)

But political pressures under the tsarist regime were incomparably less pervasive
and oppressive than under the Soviet; it was in Soviet times that Russia became the
true Gulag archipelago for everyone. It seems hardly surprising, therefore, that in the
twentieth-century Russian conception of "friendship," mutual trust came to be seen
as one of the most important features of this kind of relationship (Kon 1987:166,
Sokolov 1981:207). Whether or not this has led to any changes in the meaning of words
such as *druz'ja* (roughly 'close friends') is a point which requires further investigation.

3.1   Russian counterparts of the English *friend*—
an overview

In Russian, the categorization of human relations is particularly richly developed, in
comparison not only with Western European languages but also with other Slavic
languages. If the wealth of Hanunóo words for 'rice' (Conklin 1957) reflects the
special interest that the Hanunóo people (understandably) have in this area of reality,
the wealth of Russian words for different categories of human relations (in addition
to kin) provides evidence of Russian culture's special interest in the realm of human
relations (a special interest also reflected in the extremely rich system of expressive
derivation of Russian names, cf. Wierzbicka 1992b, chapter 7).

The main nominal categories are *drug*, *podruga*, *tovarišč* (in the sense *tovarišč₁*,
to be discussed below), *prijatel'* (Fem. *prijatel'nica*), and *znakomyj* (Fem. *znakomaja*).
Roughly speaking, the order in which these words are mentioned above could be said

to correspond to the degree of "closeness" or "strength" of the relationship. *Drug* is someone extremely close to us (much more so than the English *friend*); *podruga* refers to a bond less powerful than *drug* but still stronger than *friend*; *prijatel'* (or *prijatel'nica*) is rather more distant; and *znakomyj* (or *znakomaja*) still more distant, although closer than the supposed English equivalent *acquaintance*, normally offered by Russian-English dictionaries. (*Tovarišč*, in the relevant sense, may seem either "stronger" or "weaker" than *prijatel'*, depending on context.)

In fact, as we will see shortly, the semantic differences among the words of this group are qualitative, not quantitative, with the impression of some differences in "degree" of strength or closeness following from the presence of distinct semantic components in their meaning.

None of the Russian words matches exactly any of the English ones. To give the reader some idea of the value of the Russian words, we could say that *drug* can be compared, roughly, to a close friend (male or female), *podruga*—to a (girl's or woman's) *girlfriend, prijatel'* (fem. *prijatel'nica*) to just *friend* (without a modifier), and *znakomyj* (fem. *znakomaja*) to a close *acquaintance*; whereas *tovarišč* (in the relevant sense) can only be compared to the bound morpheme -*mate* (as in *classmates* or *workmates*), or to the nominal modifier *fellow* (as in *fellow-prisoners*). But these are only very rough approximations.

Thus, in a situation where a speaker of English may describe someone as "a friend of mine" a Russian speaker is forced to analyze the relationship much more deeply and to decide whether the person in question should be described as *drug, podruga, prijatel'nica*, or *znakomaja* (in the case of a female), or as *drug, prijatel', tovarišč*, or *znakomyj* (in the case of a male). In English, one can differentiate between various kinds of "friends" if one wants to, but one doesn't have to do so: adjectival modifiers are only optional extras; but different nouns (as in Russian) provide a different grid and force speakers to make more specific choices. For example, explaining how the question of a person's nationality was decided in the Soviet Union, the Russian writer Sergej Dovlatov (1983) writes about his different "friends" as follows:

Ja, dopustim, byl armjaninom—po materi. Moj drug, Arij Xajmovič Lerner—v russkie probilsja. . . . Moj prijatel' xudožnik Šer govoril:

—Ja napolovinu russkij, napolovinu—ukrainec, napolovinu—poljak i napolovinu—evrej.

. . . Zatem načalas' emigracija. I povalil narod obratno, v evrei. . . . Moj znakomyj Ponomarev special'no v Gomel' ezdil, tetku nanimat'. (11)

'I was, for example, an Armenian, after my mother. My friend [*drug*] Arij Xajmovič Lerner managed to get himself in among the Russians. My friend [*prijatel'*] Šer, an artist, used to say:

"I'm half Russian, half-Ukrainian, half-Polish and half-Jewish."

. . . Later the [Jewish] emigration [of the Brezhnev era] began. And everyone rushed back to being Jewish. Another friend [*znakomyj*] of mine, Ponomarev, made trips specially to Gomel' to hire himself an auntie.'

Dovlatov's careful distinctions between a *drug*, a *prijatel'*, and a *znakomyj* would normally be replaced in an English version with the all-inclusive term *friend*.

In what follows, I will discuss the Russian words one by one. (I have omitted from this survey *znakomyj*, which is similar in meaning to the Polish *znajomy*, to be discussed in section 4).[4]

3.2 *Drug*

Drug (Pl. *druz*ja) is one of the most important words in the Russian lexicon. Its very frequency in Russian speech is prodigious. In Zasorina's (1977) corpus of 1 million running words, the frequency of *drug* is 817, whereas that of *friend* in a comparable corpus of American English (Kučera & Francis 1967) is 298 (in Carroll et al. 1971, the corresponding figure is 346). Relatively speaking, *friend* is also a high frequency word in English; for example, it is much more frequent than *brother* (125 and 169). Nonetheless, *drug* is still much more common than *friend*; and the frequency of the abstract noun *družba* (155) is many times higher than that of *friendship* (27 and 8).[5]

The irregular plural of *drug* (*druz'ja*, like *brat'ja* from *brat* 'brother') provides another interesting clue to this word's meaning: *druz'ja*, like *brat'ja*, is an old collective form, and it suggests a group of people. Indeed, from an individual's point of view, one's *druz'ja* form an important social category: they are the people on whom one can rely for help and support. Neither the word *podruga* nor *prijatel'* has that implication, but for drug it is very important.

Although no data on the relative frequencies of the singular *drug* and plural *druz'ja* are available, I would judge that the plural is even more common and more salient in Russian speech than *drug*. The opposite is probably true for *prijatel'*(Sg.) and *prijateli* (Pl.): a person's *druz'ja* form this person's vital support group, but *prijateli* don't form a collective category of any kind (one can more readily say *vse moi druz'ja* 'all my *druz'ja*' and even *vse moi znakomye* 'all my acquaintances' than *vse moi prijateli*). As a form of address, too, *druz'ja* ('friends') is perfectly normal, but **prijateli* ('friends') is not acceptable.

Common phrases such as *rodnye i druz*ja 'family and *druz'ja*' and *pomošč druzej* 'the help of *druz'ja*' support the impression that the plural *druz'ja* constitutes a salient conceptual category, as does the fact that the word *druz'ja* is usually used without a possessive pronoun, whereas *prijateli* sounds better with a possessive pronoun:

Emu pomogla mat'/žena.

to-him helped mother/wife

'He was helped by his mother/wife.'

Emu pomogli druz'ja/sosedi/ego prijateli/?prijateli.

to-him helped-Pl. *druz'ja*/neighbors/his *prijateli*-Pl./?*prijateli*-Pl.

'He was helped by his *druz'ja*/neighbors/*prijateli*.'

(This is not to say that the form *prijateli*, without a possessive pronoun, would be rejected by all native speakers, but *ego prijateli* is usually preferred. This is not the case with *druz'ja*.) Similarly, in the following sentence from a novel by Sergej Dovlatov (1986:93) the word *druzej* (Pl. Acc.) occurs without a possessive modi-

fier, as the word for 'mother' would, but if the word *prijatelej* (Pl. Acc.) were to be used instead, the sentence would sound much more natural with a possessive modifier:

> Ty, Musen'ka, druzej ne zabyvaj.

> 'You, Musen'ka, don't forget [your] friends.'

> Ty, Musen'ka, materi (mother) ne zabyvaj.

> Ty, Musen'ka, svoix prijatelej ne zabyvaj.

> ?Ty, Musen'ka, prijatelej ne zabyvaj.

The importance of the concept of *druzja* in Russian life is nicely illustrated by the following six sentences, all drawn from one page of a memoir about two famous Russian dissidents, Anatolij Marčenko and Larissa Bogoraz (Litvinova 1994c:10–11):

> Druz'ja pomogli Lare s Tolej tože kupit' v Taruse kusok doma.

> 'Friends [*druzja*] also helped Lara and Tolja to buy part of a house in Tarusa.'

> V 73-m godu i pože ja tuda [v Tarusu] priezžala navestit' druzej, guljat', kupat'sja i rabotat'.

> 'In 1973, and later, I used to travel there [to Tarusa] to visit friends [*druzja*], to go on walks, to swim, and to work.'

> Gostili Sanja i Katja, priezžali i roditeli, navešcali druz'ja. . . .

> 'Frequently Sanja and Katja came to stay with them, their parents would also come, and so would friends [*druzja*]. . . .'

> Letom poblizosti selilis' Lariny roditeli i druz'ja—Lavuty, Kulaevy.

> 'In summer, Lara's parents and friends [*druzja*], the Lavuts and Kulaevs, would come to live nearby.'

> Priezžavšie na den'-dva druz'ja tože staralis' pomogat' [stroit' dom].

> 'Friends [*druzja*] who would come for a day or two also tried to help [to build the house for the Marčenkos].

> Poka že oni, vtroem ili včetverom, i mnogočislennye rodnye i druz'ja, osvobodivšiesja iz zaključenija, i presleduemye, kotorye priezžali k nim—vse jutilis' v malen'koj izbuške, razdelennoj na tri časti doščatymi peregerodkami.

> 'In the meantime, the Marčenko family, together with their numerous relatives and visiting friends [*druzja*], who had been released from prison and were still being harassed, would all huddle together in a tiny hut divided into three by wooden partitions.'

These six sentences, two of which refer to giving substantial help and four to prolonged visiting, are highly typical, and they illustrate well what *druzja* are for: seeing one's *druzja*, talking to them, spending a lot of time with them, is one of the

most important parts of a Russian's life; and so is helping one's *druz*ja when they need it. To quote Shlapentokh (1989) again:

> The notion of friend in the Soviet Union is different than in the United States. Americans use the term "friends" even for persons with whom they entertain only the most superficial relations (see, for instance, Pogrebin, 1986, who treats neighbors . . . as friends). But a friend, to Soviet people, is an individual with whom you have deep emotional, intimate relations. Friends in Soviet society characteristically maintain very intense contact. As Semen Lipkin, a Soviet author, became friends with Vasilii Grossman, the famous writer, they began to "meet each day" . . . and no Soviet reader would be amazed by this statement. (170).

On the importance of mutual help and support among friends, with special reference to the Soviet era:

> Soviet people provide each other with considerable assistance in "beating the system." Friends play an extremely vital role in procuring necessary goods, for they constantly buy each other food, clothing, shoes, or other items should the chance arise, i.e., should these items appear in stores. . . . (174)

> The mutual financial support between friends . . . is also one of the most significant aspects of Soviet private life. According to some data, up to three-quarters of Soviet people regularly borrow money from each other. (174)

Being a Russian, Shlapentokh assumes that the obligation to help a "friend," though particularly pronounced in Russian culture, is a human universal:

> In all societies, the role of friend tends to carry the expectation that, in a state of emergency—when one's life, freedom, or survival is in jeopardy—a friend will offer assistance and comfort in full measure. In Soviet society, the expectation of friends' active assistance, even when they may be put at risk, is particularly high. Again, the arbitrariness of political power in this society is largely responsible for the extraordinary demands placed upon friends. (230)

But it is highly questionable whether in all societies "friends" will be expected to "offer assistance and comfort in full measure." Certainly, no such expectation is built into the very meaning of the closest counterparts of the Russian *drug* in other languages, including the English word *friend*. It does appear, however, that such an expectation is indeed part of the very meaning of the Russian word *drug*.

Interestingly, both these key elements of the Russian concept of 'drug' (intense and intimate face-to-face communication and readiness to help) are included in Tolstoy's literary definition (given in Pierre's words to Nataša in *War and peace*):[6]

> . . . no ob odnom prošu vas—sčitajte menja svoim drugom, i ježeli vam nužna pomošč, sovet, prosto nužno budet izlit' svoju dušu komu-nibud'—ne teper', a kogda u vas jasno budet v duše,—vspomnite obo mne. (Tolstoy 1964:643)

> . . . one thing I beg of you: look on me as your friend [*drug*], and if you need help, advice, or simply need to open your heart to someone [literally to pour out your soul to someone]—not now, but when your mind [soul] is clearer—think of me. (Tolstoy 1930–1931:710)

The bond implied by the word *drug* is far stronger than that of *prijatel'*, not to mention *znakomyj*, as the following contrasts in acceptability show:

nastojaščij drug, istinnyj drug
*nastojaščij prijatel', *istinnyj prijatel'
*nastojaščij znakomyj, *istinnyj znakomyj

where *nastojaščij (-aja)* means 'real' or 'genuine' and *istinnyj (-aja)* means 'true'. Only *drug* can be described as "real" or "true" because, of the three, only *drug* implies a powerful hidden bond which could be put to the test.

The Academy of Sciences' *Dictionary of synonyms* (SSRJ) defines *drug* as "čelovek blizkij po duxu, po ubeždenijam, na kotorogo možno vo vsem položit'sja," 'a person close in spirit, in their convictions, on whom one can rely for everything'; and SSRLJ (the *Dictionary of the Russian literary language*), as "a person closely linked to someone by mutual trust, devotion, love." According to these definitions, too, the defining elements of *drug* appear to be, roughly speaking, readiness to disclose to the other person one's thoughts and feelings, complete trust, readiness to help, and intense "good feelings":

S prijateljami v kino xodjat, futbol gonjajut, a s drugom vse napopolam idet—i radost' i gore. (Mixalkov, SSRLJ)

'With *prijatel's* (Pl.) one goes to the movies, or kicks a football around, but with a *drug* one shares everything, fifty-fifty, both joy and sorrow.'

Čerez dva-tri dnja my stali uže druz'jami, xodili vsjudu vmeste, poverjali drug drugu svoi namerenija i želanija, delili porovnu vse, čto perepadalo odnomu iz nas. (Gor'kij, SSRLJ).

'Within a few days we had already become friends [*druzja*], went about everywhere together, confided to each other all our hopes and desires, and shared everything that came our way.'

A *drug* is someone on whom one can rely for help. The expression *bud' drugom*, used "dlja vyraženija usilennoj pros'by" (SSLRJ) (that is, "to intensify a request") provides evidence for this:

Na svjatkax L'vov stal ugovarivat' Platona:—Ty—xrabryj, bud' drugom, pomogi mne. (Gor'kij, SSRLJ)

'At Christmas, L'vov tried to persuade Platon: "You are brave, be a *drug*, help me." '

The expression *ne v službu a v družbu* '[please do it] not out of duty but out of friendship [*družba*]' points in the same direction.

Interestingly, the Russian *drug* is frequently used as a form of address, especially in letters, which often begin with phrases such as "Nataša, moj drug" ('Natasha, my *drug*') and end with similar expressions of *družba* 'friendship', such as "tvoj drug Andrej" ('your *drug*, Andrej').

The use of the word *drug* as a form of address may seem to have a parallel in the English phrase *my friend* used sometimes in conversation, but this is an illusion: in

English, when the phrase *my friend* is used as a form of address, its use is ironic, sarcastic, or patronizing. One doesn't address a real friend in this way. On the other hand, in Russian, phrases such as *drug, moj drug* and *dorogoj drug* 'dear *drug*' can be used affectionately to real friends (and even family members).

The fact that *drug* can be used in this way (rather like *darling* or *sweetheart* in English) suggests that it has an emotive semantic component such as 'when I think of you I feel something very good'. Neither the English *friend* nor the Russian *podruga* or *prijatel'* (or *prijatel'nica*) would justify positing such a component.

The most common collocations with *drug* include adjectives referring to the "closeness" and "specialness" of the bond,. for example, *blizkij drug* 'close friend', *zadusevnyj drug* 'soul friend', *lucsij drug* 'best friend', *edinstvennyj drug* 'only friend', and *nerazlucnye druzja* 'inseparable friends', and reliability, e.g. *vernyj drug* 'faithful friend', *nadeznyj drug* 'reliable friend', *predannyj drug* 'devoted friend', and *istinnyj drug* 'true friend' (cf. Mel'cuk & Zolkovskij 1984:293, USSSRJ 1978:147).

On the basis of all these considerations, I would propose the following explication of the concept *drug*:

> *(my) drug*
> (a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
> (b)   I know this person very well
> (c)   I think very good things about this person
> (d)   I want to often be with this person
> (e)   I want to often talk [say things] to this person
> (f)   I know: I can say anything to this person
> (g)   nothing bad will happen because of this
> (h)   I want this person to know what I think
> (i)   I want this person to know why I think this
> (j)   I want this person to know what I feel
> (k)   I want to do good things for this person
> (l)   when something bad happens to this person,
>   I can't not do something good for this person
> (m)   I know: this person thinks the same about me
> (n) when people think like this about other people, they feel something very good
> (o) I think like this about this person

As in the several subsequent explications, the first component (a) shows that *drug* refers to a common pattern of human relations, and the last that this pattern is thought of as shaping this particular relationship. Components (b) and (c) reflect the assumption that the relationship is based on knowing the other person very well (not just well, but very well), and (c) the related assumption that one holds this person in high regard. The components (f) and (g) jointly spell out something like complete trust, components (d) and (e) represent the need for frequent face-to-face interaction, components (f)–(i) correspond to the desire to "pour out one's soul" to the other person, components (k) and (l) spell out the willingness and indeed obligation to help, (m) refers to the assumption that the relationship is symmetrical, and component (n) stands for the intensive emotion.

The *Explanatory combinatorial dictionary of modern Russian* (ECD, Mel'čuk & Zholkovskij 1984) offers the following carefully phrased and very detailed definition of *drug*:

> X—drug Y-a—čelovek X takoj, čto ljudi X i Y, xorošo znaja drug druga, emocio-
> nal'no raspoloženy drug k drugu, ponimajut drug druga, duxovno blizki, predany drug
> drugu i gotovy pomogat' drug drugu, i éto kauziruet to, čto X i Y xotjat imet' kontakty
> (obyčno očnye) v sfere ličnyx interesov, pričem vse éto—ne v silu kakix-libo inyx
> otnošenij [naprimer, rodstvennyx] meždu X- om i Y-om. (292)

> 'X is Y's *drug*—X is a person such that persons X and Y, who know each other well,
> are emotionally well disposed towards each other, understand each other, are spiritu-
> ally close, are devoted to each other and are ready to help each other; and this causes
> the fact that X and Y want to be in contact (usually, face-to-face), in the domain of
> personal interests; and all this not by virtue of some other relationship (for example,
> kin) between X and Y.'

Clearly, this definition does not endeavor to use semantic primitives or simple syntactic patterns, but in content it is fairly close to the one proposed here. It contains, in a different form, all the components proposed in my explication and adds two more: the exclusion of kinship as a basis of the relationship in question, and the inclusion of spiritual closeness.

In principle, I agree with the spirit of these two additional components, but I don't think they have to be mentioned explicitly: a family member can well be described in Russian as a *drug*, and since the family ties are simply not relevant to this relationship they don't have to be mentioned in the definition at all.

The question of "spiritual closeness" is more problematic, largely because it is not quite clear what is meant by this phrase. I presume, however, that it is intended to refer to the domain of moral judgments and is probably meant to imply that in Russian culture *druzja* are expected to often agree, in important matters, on what is "good" and what is "bad." If we accepted that this expectation was indeed a necessary ingredient of the Russian concept of *drug* (*druzja*), we could spell it out in the explication along the following lines:

> when I think that it is good if someone does something
> often this person thinks the same
> when I think that it is bad if someone does something
> often this person thinks the same

Given other evidence for the importance of absolute moral judgments in Russian culture (cf. e.g. Bauer, Inkeles & Kluckhohn 1956:142; Walicki 1980:100–110; Wierzbicka 1992b:435–440) the idea that this kind of moral unity is seen as a necessary ingredient of Russian "družba" (close friendship) is appealing; whether or not it is a necessary semantic component of the word *drug*, however, is a question which I would like to leave open.

I would add that "spiritual closeness" as an ingredient of the relationship between "friends" (*druzja*) is also mentioned by Shlapentokh (1984:229), in whose view the

relationship between *druzja* (especially men) is often closer and more open than that between family members and even that between husbands and wives:

> ... lying to family members is only a part of a general pattern of lying in Soviet life.
> ... Thus, it is to friends that the Soviet people are more likely to turn to fulfill the expressive need in their lives. (225)

> ... quite often the spiritual closeness between friends is greater than that between husbands and wives, the role of friends in such interpersonal communication is probably greater. This is especially true among men. (229)

It seems to me, however, that the components 'I know: I can say anything to this person' and 'nothing bad will happen because of this' (in combination with the other components of the proposed explication) sufficiently account for all those aspects of the concept 'drug' which are implied by the word as such.

3.3 Podruga

Russian-English dictionaries (e.g. Smirnickij 1961, Wheeler 1972), gloss the word *podruga* (etymologically related to *drug*) as "(female) friend," and since *drug* is glossed as "friend," this seems to imply that *podruga* is simply a female counterpart of *drug*. But this impression is deceptive, first, because a woman or a girl, too, can be called a *drug*, second, because calling a woman a *drug* does not mean the same as calling her a *podruga*, and third, because a man's or a boy's female friends are normally not called his *podrugi* (Pl.).

Before discussing the different implications of these two words (*podruga* and *drug*) as applied to relations between women or girls, we must note that in addition to its main use, *podruga* also has three other uses, which offer helpful clues to the main meaning of this word: first, when applied to nonpermanent heterosexual relationships, *podruga* has a meaning similar (though not identical) to that of the English word *girlfriend* (as in "his girlfriend"); second, in the expression *podruga žizni*, 'life *podruga*', it refers to a man's wife, seen as someone who shares his life (Wheeler 1972 glosses this meaning as "helpmate"); and third, *podruga* is often used in a metaphorical sense, as "loving companion," especially in poetry—often with reference to a woman but in poetry also to a concrete object or an abstract idea (when the Russian word for it has the feminine gender). For example (from Pushkin):

> Podruga dnej moix surovyx,
> golubka drjaxlaja moja.

> '*Podruga* of my sombre days,
> My poor old darling.' [to his old nanny]

> Goriš li ty, lampada naša,
> Podruga bdenij i pirov.

> 'Are you burning, our lamp,
> The *podruga* of wakefulness and all-night feasts.'

> Zadumčivost', ee podruga
> Ot samyx kolybel'nyx dnej,

Tečenie sel'skogo dosuga
Mečtami ukrašala ej.

'Pensiveness, her companion [*podruga*]
even from cradle days,
the course of rural leisure
with daydreams beautified for her.'
(Nabokov's translation, Pushkin 1975:138)

The phrase *podruga dnej moix surovyx* ('*podruga* of my sombre days'), implies that at the time the addressee, Pushkin's old nanny, was his constant (and only) companion and that her presence softened the loneliness and the bleakness of his days. Similarly, the phrase *zadumčivost', ee podruga* ('pensiveness, her *podruga*') implies that pensiveness "was always with" Tat'jana, and the verb *ukrašala* (beautified/colored) implies that Tat'jana felt something good because of that constant companion. Finally, the phrase *lampada naša, podruga bdenij i pirov* ('our lamp, a *podruga* of wakefulness and [long-night] feasts'), implies that the lamp "was always there" and that it made the atmosphere pleasant and enjoyable. The phrase *podruga žizni* 'one's life's *podruga*' (referring to a man's wife) has similar implications (the wife is always with her husband, and her presence is a source of "good feelings"). These additional uses of *podruga* highlight the elements of companionship and 'sharing of life' present in its meaning but absent from the meaning of *drug*. In fact, some dictionaries hint at this aspect of *podruga* without spelling it out in definitions.

For example, Rozanova (1978) glosses *podruga* in English as *friend*, but in French as *amie, compagne* ('friend, companion'); and Smirnickij (1961) glosses the expression *podruga detstva*, literally 'a childhood *podruga*', as *playmate* (thus highlighting the aspect of shared activities).

Similarly, the *Dictionary of the Russian language* (SRJ) defines *podruga* as follows: "devočka, devuška ili ženščina sostojaščaja v družeskix, tovariščeskix otnošenijax s kem-nibud'" ('a girl or a woman who has a *družeskoe, tovariščeskoe* relationship with someone'), thus describing the relationship in question as not simply *družeskoe* (adjective derived from *drug*) but also *tovariščeskoe* (adjective derived from *tovarišč*). Since, as we will see later, *tovarišč* refers crucially to sharing (of life experiences), this definition, too, highlights an important difference between *podruga* and *drug*. In the case of *podruga*, this sharing has to be long-term, as reflected in the following definition: "devočka, devuška ili ženščina, s detskix ili s davnix let blizko sdruživšajasja s kem-nibud'" ('a girl or a woman who has been for a long time, often from childhood on, someone's close friend') (TSRJ 1940).

All these definitions offer helpful hints, but they all fail to mention the specifically "inter-female" character of the relationship implied by the word *podruga* and, more generally, to sort out the distinct meaning of this word from others in the group. To see that the word is indeed polysemous, and that the implications of specifically "inter-female" kind of friendship are not due to context, it is sufficient to consider common expressions such as *podruga detstva* 'childhood friend (*podruga*)' and *škol'nye podrugi* (Pl.) 'school friends (*podrugi*)'. If *podruga* really meant something like 'female friend', there would be no reason why such expressions could not refer

to boys' childhood friends, or school friends, but in fact they normally refer only to inter-female relationships,[7] and a sentence such as

? On pošel guljat' s podrugami.

'he went for a walk with his *podrugi*'

sounds very strange.

To see the main meaning of *podruga* more clearly, therefore, it is better to consider first the meaning of the plural form *podrugi*, which cannot apply to the other meaning of this word. Roughly speaking, this form refers to female friends who have for a long time shared life experiences and whose existential situation is similar—with the implication that these shared life experiences have something to do with the nature of women's lives and that women's existential situation is linked with their gender. In a more formulaic form, these "specifically female" implications of the form *podrugi* can be spelled out along the following lines (to be refined later):

> many women think about other women like this:
>   this person is someone like me
>   often, when I do something, this person does similar things
>   often, when something happens to me, similar things happen to this person
>   often this person feels similar things to me

A *podruga* is someone who can provide a woman or a girl with much needed and highly valued company of "someone like herself." The following nineteenth-century example illustrates these implications very nicely:

Ona žalela o tom, čto ee vospitannica ne budet imet' podrug v derevne. (Černyševskij, SRJ)

'She was sorry that in the village her adopted daughter [ward] would not have any *podrugi* [Pl.].'

It is also interesting to note that Dal''s 1955[1882] dictionary of Russian includes the following comment about the use of *podrugi* and its diminutive *podružki* in folk speech: "O devicax odnoletkax, vyrossix vmeste," 'about girls of the same age who have grown up together'. Dal' illustrates this use with the words of a folk song and with two proverbs:

Kak pošli naši podružki v les po jagody guljat'.

'When our *podružki* (Pl. Dim.) went for a walk in the forest to gather berries.'

Podružka—poduška (drugoj net).

'A *podružka* is [one's best] pillow (there is no other).'

U xorošej nevesty po semi podrug.

'A good prospective fiancée has seven *podrugi*.'

The fact that one can talk about *druzja po perepiske* '*druzja* by correspondence, pen-friends', but not **podrugi po perepiske*, '*podrugi* by correspondence', points in the same direction: *podrugi* have to be together and to share life experiences.

Mutual help (though very common) is not a necessary ingredient of this relationship: for this concept being together (with a like-minded person) in a shared mood is more important than doing things for one another. The contrast between *podruga* and *drug* used in close succession in the following passage provides a good illustration of this (Litvinova 1994d:12):

Ėto kto u tebja, Larissa? Podruga? Xorošo, a to tjažko odnoj. Toska.

I čto on, bedolaga, sejčas peredumyvaet, kak ob vas duša u nego bolit. . . .

Priexala k Lare okolo 7 večera—na prjamom poezde. Zdes' Nina Petrovna— dobryj, tixij, dejatel'nyj drug. V dome porjadok—vse postirano, N.P. gladit.

'Who is with you, Larissa? A girlfriend [*podruga*]? That's good, it's hard to be alone. It is painful. And what is he, poor soul, thinking about now, how his heart must ache for you. . . .

I came to Lara's about 7 in the evening—by express train. Nina Petrovna is here—a good, quiet, helpful friend [*drug*]. Everything is in good order in the house—everything has been washed, N.P. is doing the ironing.'

The woman referred to in this passage, Larissa, is tormented by anxiety about her husband, Anatolij Marčenko, who has been arrested by the KGB. A sympathic woman-neighbor, worried about Larissa, is pleased to see that she has the company of a *podruga*. Two sentences further, another woman-friend of Larissa's is mentioned, who comes in and simply starts doing Larissa's household chores for her (washing, ironing). In the first case, (focusing on company), the word *podruga* naturally comes to mind, in the second (focusing on help), *drug* (and the phrase *dejatel'nyj drug* 'an actively helping *drug*').

Consider also the following example (again from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin,* with Nabokov's translation):

Kogda že njanja sobirala
Dlja Ol'gi na širokij lug
Vsex malen'kix ee podrug,
Ona [Tat'jana] v gorelki ne igrala,
Ej skučen byl i zvonkij smex
I šum ix vetrenyx utex.

'Whenever nurse assembled
for Olga, on the spacious lawn,
all her small girl companions,
she did not play at barleybreaks,
dull were to her both ringing laughter
and noise of their giddy diversions.' (138)

Ol'ga's little *podrugi,* gathered for her by her nanny, are other little girls with whom Ol'ga likes to share her activities and her fun. These other little girls would probably not qualify as *druzja,* but they are like-minded companions, of a similar

position in life, with whom little Ol'ga likes to be together, feeling that each of them is someone like herself (partly because they are all girls).

Yet, despite all this existential closeness, *podruga* does not have the emotional warmth of *drug*. This absence of "warmth" is reflected in the fact that, except in metaphorical usage, *podruga* cannot be used as a form of address; for example, one cannot start a letter with the phrase *Anna, moja* ('my') *podruga*, or *Anna, dorogaja* ('dear') *podruga*. In metaphorical usage, on the other hand, *podruga* is often so used (as in one of the examples from Pushkin quoted earlier).

Given the specifically "inter-female" character of friendship implied by *podruga*, one might expect that this word will also imply a willingness to confide in one another, to open one's heart to one another (at least as much as *drug* does). But this is not exactly the case. In Russia, both women and men are expected to "open their hearts" (or, as Tolstoy says, to "pour out their soul") to their close friends, regardless of gender, and this cultural expectation is reflected in the semantics of the word *druzja*. *Podruga* focuses on something else: a bond based on perceiving the other person as being someone like me, both with respect to our existential position (doing and happening) and with respect to feelings ("someone who feels the same things as I do").

The fact that the bond between *podrugi* (Pl.) is seen as largely existential may explain, to some extent, why *podruga* does not imply a "high opinion" of, or high regard for, the other person in the way *drug* does. Some good opinion is implied, but not necessarily "very good" opinion, as in the case of *drug*.

To sum up all these considerations, I would propose the following explication of *podruga* (in the sense under discussion):

(my) podruga

(a) everyone knows: many women think about some other women like this:

(b) I know this person very well

(c) I have known this person for a long time

(d) I think something good about this person

(e) this person is someone like me

(f) I have often been with this person

(g) often, when I did some things,
     this person did similar things

(h) often, when some things happened to me,
     similar things happened to this person

(i) often, when I felt some things,
     this person felt similar things

(j) when I am with this person, I feel something good

(k) I know: this person thinks the same about me

(l) I think like this about this person

3.4 *Prijatel'*

Alexander Pushkin's masterpiece *Eugene Onegin* introduces the hero with the following lines:

Onegin, dobryj moj prijatel'
Rodilsja na bregax Nevy.

'Onegin, a good pal [*prijatel'*] of mine
Was born upon the Neva's banks' (Pushkin 1975:96)

These lines define the narrator's attitude to the hero—friendly, but rather distant. The set of modifiers that the word prijatel' takes underscores this distance: while both a *prijatel'* and a *drug* can be described as *dobryj* or *xorošij*, only *drug* would be normally described as *lučšij* 'best', *edinstvennyj* 'only', *bol'šoj* 'great', *zaduševnyj* 'soul-friend', or *zakadyčnyj* 'bosom-friend' (cf. e.g. **bol'šoj prijatel'*), and only *druzja*, not *prijateli* (Pl.), would be normally described as *nerazlučnye* 'inseparable'.

Similar contrasts can be observed in the collocations *rodnye i druzja* 'family and *druzja*' vs. **rodnye i prijateli* 'family and *prijateli*', the second of which could be compared to the bizarre combination *family and distant friends*, in contrast to *family and close friends*.

The Academy of Sciences' *Dictionary of synonyms* (SSRJ) describes the meaning of *prijatel'* as follows:

prijatel'—čelovek, s kotorym složilis' xorošie, prostye, no ne očen' blizkie otnošenija

'*prijatel'*—a person with whom one has good, simple, but not very close relations'

Many examples of the use of the word *prijatel'* gathered in dictionaries support the gist of this definition and highlight the difference between *drug* (very close) and *prijatel'* (not very close). For instance:

S prijateljami v kino xodjat, futbol gonjajut, a s drugom vse napopolam idet—i radost' i gore. Prijatel'—čto! Ix mnogo byvaet. A drug—odin. (Mixalkov, SSRJ)

'With one's *prijateli* [Pl.] one goes to the movies, or chases a football, but with a *drug* one shares everything, fifty-fifty, both joy and sorrow.'

Prijatelej u Gavrika bylo mnogo, a nastojaščix druzej vsego odin: Petja. (Kataev, SSRLJ).

'Gavrik had many *prijateli*, but only one real *drug*: Petja.'

V ego družbe ko mne bylo čto-to neudobnoe, tjagostnoe, i ja oxotno predpočel by ej obyknovennye prijatel'skie otnošenija. (Čexov, SSRJ).

'In his friendship (*družba*) for me there was something uncomfortable, awkward, and I would have preferred to have an ordinary *prijatel'*-like relationship with him.'

As these examples (the first of which we have already seen) suggest, *prijatel'*, in contrast to drug, does not imply a willingness to confide in the other person, to open one's heart to them, and to "share with them one's joys and sorrows." Nor does it imply that one can always count on the other person's help and support. Instead, it implies that one knows the other person well (but not necessarily very well) and that one enjoys their company. There is no implication that one thinks very good things about this person. More precisely, the meaning of *prijatel'* can be represented as follows:

(*my*) *prijatel'*

(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this :

(b) I know this person well

(c) when I am with this person, I feel something good

(d) when I do something with this person, I feel something good

(e) I think this person thinks the same about me

(f) I think like this about this person

The examples from Russian quoted earlier, which explicitly contrast the two words *prijatel'* and *drug*, highlight the importance of this distinction in Russian and, more generally, the importance that Russian culture attaches to the classification of human relations. Furthermore, judging by the frequencies of the two words (as reported in frequency dictionaries), the category of *drug* (very close "friend") is far more important in Russian culture than that of *prijatel'* (a more casual kind of "friend").

The explication of *prijatel'* sketched here is in fact quite similar to that assigned to the English *friend* (*friend₂*). The main difference is that *friend* expresses a more active attitude: one seeks, as well as enjoys, the company of "friends" and shared activities with them. In this respect, *friend* resembles *drug* rather than *prijatel'*; but otherwise, *friend* is more like *prijatel'* than *drug*.

3.5 Tovarišč

The word *tovarišč* was of central importance in the Soviet era in its political meaning, usually rendered in English as "comrade". Although the use of the word *tovarišč* in this sense was politically driven and imposed from above, its status in the Russian language of the Soviet era cannot simply be compared to that of the English *comrade*. Being addressed as *tovarišč* was a sign of belonging; losing this title and losing the right to apply it to others was a sign of exclusion and could have easily been a prelude to arrest, incarceration, and death.[8]

If only one word were to be nominated as the key word of the Soviet Russian, it would probably have to be this one. Although after the collapse of communism in Russia this politically driven use of the word *tovarišč* quickly started to recede, it will always keep its place in Russian history as a symbol of a long and terrible era, and as such it certainly deserves analytical attention. It should be noted that throughout the Soviet era *tovarišč* also retained its earlier, nonpolitical meaning, and that that nonpolitical meaning has never lost ground. To avoid confusion, I will distinguish the two meanings as *tovarišč₂* (political) and *tovarišč₁* (nonpolitical).

Although we do not have any statistical data on the relative frequencies of these two meanings in Russian speech, we do have some data on the frequency of the word *tovarišč* as such, and these data suggest that in the Soviet era *tovarišč* was one of the most frequently used nouns in the Russian language (in Zasorina's frequency dictionary it is the sixth most frequent noun, following only such basic nouns as *god* 'year', *delo* 'matter', *čelovek* 'man', *žizn'* 'life', and *den'* 'day', and its frequency in a corpus of 1 million running words is a phenomenally high 1,162; in a comparable corpus of American English [Kučera & Francis 1967], *comrade* doesn't appear at all, and

brother has a frequency of 124; in Carroll et al. 1971 *comrade* occurs 7 times, and *brother* 169 times).

In fact, the *Dictionary of the Russian language* (SSRLJ) distinguishes as many as six distinct meanings of the word *tovarišč*, but this is clearly a case of "multiplying beings beyond necessity": all that is justified is the distinction between the relational (nonpolitical) sense, as in *moj* ('my') *tovarišč*, and an "absolute" (political) sense (as in *tovarišč* tout court). Accordingly, in the discussion which follows, I will distinguish only two meanings: the relational *tovarišč₁* and the absolute *tovarišč₂*.

SRLJ assigns to the relational meaning of *tovarišč* (my *tovarišč₁*) three different definitions:

1. A man participating with someone in the same case, affair, enterprise etc.

2. A man linked with others by a common profession, place of work; a colleague.

3. A man linked with someone by ties of friendship [*družba*]; a close friend [*prijatel'*, *drug*].

Undoubtedly, a *tovarišč detstva* ('childhood friend'), a *škol'nyj tovarišč* ('school friend'), or *tovarišč po škol'noj skam'e* (literally 'someone sharing the same school bench') is not the same thing as a *tovarišč po rabote* ('fellow-worker'), *tovarišč po universitetu* ('fellow-student'), *tovarišč po nesčast'ju* ('fellow-sufferer'), or *tovarišč po kamere* ('fellow-prisoner, sharing the same cell'), but the differences are here due to context, not to the word *tovarišč* itself. What all these different uses of *tovarišč₁* have in common is the idea of a bond based on shared life experiences, linked with a shared position in life, and a shared "lot."

The *Dictionary of synonyms* (SSRJ), which wisely attributes a unitary meaning to *tovarišč₁*, defines this meaning as follows: *tovarišč* —a man close [to someone] by virtue of his kind of activity, occupation, conditions of life, etc., and tied [to this person] by common views, and friendly relations.

Although not fully accurate, this is not a bad definition, and its reference to shared conditions of life is insightful. Like the English word *fellow* (as in *fellow-prisoners*), *tovarišč₁* refers to a bond based not on a purely voluntary association but on one imposed on us by, so to speak, life itself: not on what we choose to do but on what happens to us. The main formal difference between the Russian *tovarišč₁* and the English *fellow* (as in *fellow-students* and *fellow-prisoners*) is that the former is, syntactically, a noun, whereas the latter (in the relevant sense) is not a full blown noun but a kind of prefix, almost on a par with the prefix *co-*. This formal difference is associated with a semantic difference: *tovarišč₁* is one of the basic categories for categorizing human relations (like *friend* in English, or *drug* in Russian), whereas *fellow-* is not; like its fellow-prefix *co-*, *fellow-* is both syntactically and semantically a modifier, not an independent category of thought.

The concomitant cultural difference seems quite clear: it is only in Russian that the idea of "sharing the same lot" is so salient that it has become a basis for one of the fundamental categories in the interpretation of human relations. It is, in a way, an echo of *sud'ba* (cf. Wierzbicka 1992b, chap. 2).

It is important to point out, therefore, that the dictionary's reference to a shared "kind of activity" (as well as shared "conditions of life") is not part of the word's semantic invariant. For example, the common phrase *tovarišči po nesčastju* 'fellow-sufferers' does not refer to any activity at all; and the frequent use of the word *tovarišči* in the prison and camp literature (as illustrated below) also highlights the central relevance of "conditions of life" over and above any shared activities.

Of course, some common "conditions of life" imply also some kinds of activities, and, for example, the existence of schoolboys, or soldiers, can be viewed either from the point of view of what they do or from the point of view of what happens to them. But as the phrase *tovarišči po nesčastju* 'fellow-sufferers' shows, the word *tovarišči*₁ as such highlights an undergoer's, not an agent's, perspective.

Some examples:

Soldaty bezmolvno smotreli na èto strašnoe zrelišče [kazn']. Nikto iz nix ne rinulsja na zaščitu svoix tovariščej. (Novikov-Priboj, SRLJ).

'The soldiers were silently watching the terrible sight [execution]. None of them made a move to try to defend his *tovarišči* [Pl.].'

A čto, vy drug emu?—drug ne drug, a tovarišč. (Semenov, SSRJ.)

'What, are you his *drug*?—Perhaps not a *drug*, but a *tovarišč*.'

U nego zavjazalas' družba s tovariščami po rabote. (Gorbatov, SSRJ).

'He developed a friendship [*družba*] with his workmates [work *tovarišči*].'

And some more recent examples:

Tri goda ja ležala tixo-tixo noči naprolet i myslenno rasskazyvala. Obo vsem. Ne tol'ko o sebe. O tovariščax po nesčast'ju, s kotorymi menja svela sud'ba, ob ix gorestnyx stradanijax, tragičeskix slučajax ix žizni. (Adamova-Sliozberg 1993:8).

'For three years, I lay awake at night telling the story of it all in my thoughts. About everything. Not just about myself. About my companions in misfortune with whom fate [*sud'ba*] had brought me in contact, about their grievous sufferings, the tragic circumstances of their lives.'

A est' takie zavlekatel'nye tjurmy, gde dajut obryvki knižnoj pečati—i čto èto za čtenie! ugadat' *otkuda* . . . —pomenjat'sja s tovariščami. (Solzhenitsyn 1973:211)

'And there are prisons which have the engaging practice of providing fragments ripped out of books—what a great read that is—to try and guess where it comes from . . . , swap bits with your comrades [*tovarišči*].' (On prison latrines)

Edut [na poxorony Marčenko] krome Pavlika i Sani [Danielja], Katja s Mišej, Kolja Mjuge, Genja Lubeneckij—tovarišč Sani. (Litvinova, 1994a:10)

'Those traveling [to Marčenko's funeral] include Pavlik and Sanja [Daniel], Katja and Miša, Kolja Mjuge, and Genja Lubeneckij—a *tovarišč* of Sanja's.'

If one considers the time, the effort, and the political risk involved in traveling to the funeral of a leading dissident in a remote island of the Gulag archipelago, the participation of someone described as "a *tovarišč* of Sanja's" (a son of Larissa's,

Marčenko's wife, by an earlier marriage) illustrates well the human weight of the concept encapsulated in the word *tovarišč₁*. Clearly, the relationship between the two men is not considered to be close enough for the word *drug* to be used here, and yet few "friends" would be expected to do as much.

The assumption of similarity in one's existential position links *tovarišč₁*, in one respect, with *podruga* (in the plural, *podrugi*), but there are also important differences between these two concepts. My *podruga* is someone whose existential position, so to speak, is similar to mine (as, for example, in the phrase *škol'naja podruga* 'a school-Adj. *podruga*'); but it cannot be someone who is simply "in the same boat" because the same misfortune has befallen us both. Hence the unacceptability of a phrase such as **podruga po nesčast'ju* ('*podruga* in misfortune') or **podruga po kamere* ('*podruga* by prison cell'). Unlike in *tovarišč₁*, in *podruga* there is also an element of personal attraction and personal choice.

This asymmetry between *podruga* and *tovarišč₁* throws an interesting light on the different expectations with regard to males' and females' lives in Russia. Let us compare, for example, the position of schoolgirls and schoolboys in an Anglo society (say, in America), in Poland, and in Russia. In an Anglo society, both a girl and a boy would usually refer to some of their classmates as "friends." In Poland, the basic word used for classmates is *koledzy* (referring to boys) and *koleżanki* (referring to girls). The Polish dictionary equivalents of *friend*, namely *przyjaciel* (male) and *przyjaciółka* (female) are normally not used for the classmates that one associates with. Usually, they are reserved only for one person, roughly the equivalent of the English *best friend*. This means that while the basic social grid applied in Anglo schools and Polish schools is different, nonetheless in both systems girls and boys are treated essentially in the same way.

This is not the case in a Russian school. Here, there are no colloquial words applying to all classmates (as in the case of the Polish words *koledzy* and *koleżanki*), and there is no colloquial word for those boys and girls who one usually associates with (as in the case of the English *friend*). Instead, girls are expected to have *podrugi* (a specifically female form of friendship), whereas boys' classmates can be seen as their *tovarišč₁* (unless they are especially close friends, that is, *druzja*). A girl's close friends (male, or a mixed group) can also be seen as *druzja*, but for girls, there is no colloquial equivalent of *tovarišč₁* and for boys, there is no equivalent of *podrugi*.

This is not to say that the word *tovarišč₁*—unlike *druzja*—can never be used with reference to women. It can, especially in contexts where the focus is on solidarity (often, the solidarity of prison or camp inmates, as in the example from Sliozberg quoted earlier or in the example from Solzhenitsyn which follows); but prototypically, it refers to men (or at least did in pre-Soviet times).

Anna Skripnikova ... požalovalas' sledovatel'ju, čto ee odnokamernic načal'nik Lubjanki taskaet za volosy. Sledovatel' rassmejalsja i sprosil: "A vas tože taskaet?"— "Net, no moix tovariščej!" (Solzhenitsyn 1974:301)

'Anna Skripnikova complained to her interrogator that the head of the Lubyanka prison had been pulling her cellmates around by their hair. Her interrogator laughed

and asked, "And does he pull you by the hair as well?" "No, but he does my comrades [*tovarišči*]!'"

Nonetheless, women companions with whom one is on friendly terms are more likely to be referred to as *podrugi*, and if they are very close, as *druzja*, as in the following example:

> Proev neskol'ko rublej, sobrannyx lagernymi druz'jami, Stoljarova vernulas' k zone, sovrala oxrane . . . , i—v svoj barak! . . . Podrugi okružili, prinesli s kuxni balandy. (Solzhenitsyn 1975:467)

> 'Having eaten her way through the few rubles her camp friends [*druzja*] had collected for her, Stolyarova returned to the zone, tricked the guards into letting her back in—and went straight to her hut. . . . Her friends [*podrugi*] clustered round her and brought her some gruel from the kitchen.' (A prisoner released from a camp decides the only way she can survive is by getting back into the camp.)

Another way of describing the situation in Russian is to say that Russian singles out, lexically, a special category of human relations (namely *tovarišči*), which refers to prototypically male solidarity based on shared experiences of groups of males thrown together by "fate"—as in the case of soldiers or prisoners. There is no element of personal choice in that solidarity, but there is an expectation of mutual good feelings and good will based on the fact of having been thrown together into the same circumstances, as equals (like brothers in misfortune). The following examples illustrate this bond particularly clearly.

> Za den' ili za dva dnja pered ètim oni xorošo pogovorili s Alekseem i oba kak-to vnutrenne daže poradovalis', čto oni tovarišči po nesčast'ju i u nix oboix odinakovo složnoe sostojanie ličnyx del. (Polevoj, SSRLJ)

> 'One or two days before that, he had had a good talk with Aleksej, and they both felt very pleased that they were fellows in misfortune [*tovarišči* in disaster] and that they were both in a similarly difficult personal situation.'

> Vot Vas'ka, on u nas molodčina! . . . Ni nad čem dlja tovarišča ne zadumaetsja. (Veresaev, SSRJ).

> 'That Vas'ka, he is a great chap! He would do anything for a *tovarišč*.'

> . . . a takoe čuvstvo, budto serdce otorvala ot samogo dorogogo i ljubimogo, ot tovariščej po nesčast'ju. (Solzhenitsyn 1975:476)

> 'And a feeling as if one's heart had been torn away from that which is dearest to it—one's comrades [*tovarišči*] in suffering.' (a camp prisoner's feelings just after her release)

In particular, one normally doesn't want "bad things" to happen to one's *tovarišči*, as one doesn't want "bad things" to happen to oneself, as the following example illustrates:

Ja smotrela na svoix tovariščej po nesčast'ju i žalela ix ščemjaščej žalost'ju potomu, čto znala, čto éti ljudi osuždeny na tot strašnyj krestnyj put', kotoryj ja uže prošla. (Adamova-Sliozberg 1993:177)

'I looked at my companions in misfortune and felt the keenest pity for them, for I knew that these people were condemned to undergo that same terrible ordeal that I myself had already undergone.' (Sliozberg was imprisoned for a second time.)

Thus, although not chosen voluntarily, the bond with one's *tovarišči* can be expected to be strong—often as strong as with a *drug*, as evidenced by the collocation *drug-tovarišč* or, rarely, *tovarišč-drug*:

Ja s otkrovennoj dušoj prišel k tebe . . . kak k drugu-tovarišč..' (Gladkij, SSRLJ)

'I have come to you with an open heart—as to a friend [*drug-tovarišč*].'

. . . kak s tovariščem-drugom, govorit on s toboj. (Tvardovskij, SSRLJ).

'He talks with you as with a friend [*tovarišč-drug*].'

On the basis of all these considerations, I would propose the following explication:

(my) tovarišč₁
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this sometimes:
(b)   these people are people like me
(c)   these people are in the same place as I
(d)   the same things happen to these people as to me
(e)   I don't want bad things to happen to these people as I don't want bad thing to happen to me
(f) when people think like this about other people, they feel something good
(g) many men think like this about some other men
(h) I think like this about this person

Component (a) reflects the "collectivist" perspective of the concept *tovarišči₁* and allows for the inclusion of women, while component (g) shows that prototypically the word refers to groups of men. Component (b) shows the equality of the members of the group, (c) their togetherness, and (d) their shared condition and their perceived status of undergoers rather than agents. Component (e) reflects the solidarity and group identification implied by this word, (f) the warmth, (g) a prototypical male group focus, while (h) reflects the fact that despite its group orientation, it can also refer to one person.

Unlike in the case of *druz'ja* (Pl.) or *podrugi* (Pl.), there is no implication that one knows one's *tovariščej* (Acc. Pl.) well or very well, or that one thinks of them good, or very good, things; and there is no question here of any desire to be together, to talk, or to open one's hearts to one another. Nonetheless, a fellow-feeling is certainly there—frequently leading to the emotion of *žalet'* (roughly 'warm, intense compassion'). The frequent co-occurrence of the words *tovarišči* and *žalet'* in Russian

literature is certainly striking, as the last example from Adamova-Sliozberg and the following one illustrate:

Ja tol'ko gorjačo žalela svoix tovariščej' po nesčast'ju i nenavidela našix palačej. (Adamova-Sliozberg 1993:220)

'I just pitied with all my heart my companions in misfortune and loathed our murderous tormentors.'

One may wonder whether the components (f) and (g) are compatible with examples such as the one quoted earlier about the soldiers, none of whom tried to defend their tovariščej (Acc. Pl.) from execution, but I think it is. The whole point of the quoted sentence was the contradiction between the soldiers' observed behavior and their presumed or expected feelings. The same applies to the following sentence about a student forced by her interrogator in prison to make false accusations against other students:

On fabrikoval i zastavljal ee podpisyvat' čudoviščnye protokoly, obvinjat' desjatki ee tovariščej. (Adamova-Sliozberg 1993:189)

'He fabricated, then forced her to sign grotesque protocols implicating dozens of her fellow-students (tovarišči).

3.6 Tovarišč$_2$ ('comrade')

Tovarišč$_2$ has no doubt developed out of the earlier meaning tovarišč$_1$. One can almost see this transition in examples such as the following one, where the word tovarišč is still accompanied by a possessive pronoun but where it clearly refers to political and ideological "comrades":

V rasprostranenii že učenij nazvannyx pisatelej [Marksa i Engelsa] imenno i zaključaetsja cel' moix tovariščej. (Plexanov; SSRLJ).

'The goal of my tovarišči is precisely to spread the teachings of these writers [Marx and Engels].'

Subsequently, however, the possessive pronoun was dropped and an absolute use of tovarišč developed in which the very absence of a possessive pronoun signaled that both the speaker and the audience were presumed to belong to the same speech and thought community and to be permanently united in a common ideology, a common struggle, and a common pursuit. As Majakovskij put it:

Nado obvjazat' i žizn' mužčin i ženščin
Slovom nas ob"edinjajuščim: "Tovarišč"
(SSRLJ)

'We should bind together the lives of men and women with this word which unites us: "Comrade."'

Who would be seen as tovarišč in that new sense of the word was spelled out in Lenin's words, designed to ignite the October revolution:

Tovarišči rabočie, soldaty, krest'jane i vse trudjaščiesja! Berite vsju vlast' v ruki svoix sovetov! (SSRLJ)

'Comrade workers, soldiers, peasants, and all working people! Take the power into the hands of your councils (soviets)!'

As a force unifying the Soviet people (and implicitly excluding others) the word *tovarišč₂* came to be valued and cherished almost above all other Russian words:

Naše slovo gordoe "tovarišč"
Nam dorože vsex krasivyx slov.
(Lebedev-Kumač, SSRLJ)

'Our proud word "comrade"
is dearer to us than the most beautiful words.'

Used in this new sense, the word *tovarišč₂* implied a kind of collective identification: if X called Y a *tovarišč₂*, X assumed that Y was someone like him (X); and at the same time, X was referring to many other people with whom they both (Y and X) could identify ('there are many people like this; Y is one of them, I am one of them').

This collective identification presupposed common ideals and common goals ('these people want the same things to happen', 'these people want to do many things because of this'). Presumably, the common ideals and goals hinted at in the concept of *tovarišč₂* were, in an embryonic form, the basic ideals and goals of the communist ideology: the future good of the masses of the "working people," class struggle, struggle against all the forces of "counter-revolution." This can be represented as follows: 'these people (i.e. all the "comrades") want good things to happen to very many people', 'these people want bad things to happen to some other people (because of this)'. The common struggle of all the *tovarišči₂* (Pl.) implied shared experiences and similar risks ('the same things can happen to these people because of this'). Finally, the word *tovarišč₂* implied appreciation and high regard for those on whom it was bestowed. I will represent this as follows: 'I think something very good about these people'.

Before proposing my own explication of *tovarišč₂*, I will first adduce Nikita Khrushchev's definition, which in fact tallies quite well with all the points mentioned above:

Slovo "tovarišč" vyražaet edinomyslie, i ravenstvo, i bratstvo, i uvaženie, i sotrudničestvo. (SSRLJ)

'The word "comrade" expresses unanimity, and equality, and brotherhood, and respect, and cooperation.'

I propose, then, the following explication:

tovarišč₂
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
(b)   these people are people like me
(c)   there are many people like this
(d)   these people want the same things to happen

(e) these people want good things to happen to very many people
(f) these people want bad things to happen to some other people because of this
(g) these people want to do many things because of this
(h) I think something very good about all these people
(i) when I think about these people, I feel something good
(j) I think about this person like this

As this explication suggests, in *tovarišč₂* the emphasis has shifted from things that happen to people to things that people want to happen and to things that people want to do. One might say that the "solidarity of undergoers" (not to say "victims") has been replaced by the "solidarity of agents"; and while the positive affective attitude remained ('when I think about these people I feel something good'), the attitude of "solidarity of undergoers" ('I don't want bad things to happen to these people, as I don't want bad things to happen to me'), natural in people who see themselves as potential victims of life, disappeared, being replaced by an attitude of mutual regard ('I think something very good about these people'), natural in self-confident agents, aware of their numbers and their power.

The component 'these people are people like me' remained, but it was expanded and broadened (and diluted) by the reference to many people ('there are many people like this'), united not by the vicissitudes of fate but by a common ideology and purpose (b)–(g). Interestingly, the group identification implied by *tovarišč₂* was no longer focused on men: there is no reference to men, only to people, in the explication of *tovarišč₂*.

It is hardly necessary to point out that, from the first to the last component, the whole explication sounds phony, as the word *tovarišč* itself (in its political sense) has always done.

3.7 Rodnye ('one's own people, close relatives')

The concept of *rodnye* is another important Russian category of thought. Russian-English dictionaries usually translate this word with the English word *relatives*, but the two words are far from equivalent. In fact, Russian does have a lexical equivalent of *relatives*, namely, *rodstvenniki*, but this is not the same as *rodnye*.

First of all, the word *rodnye* refers normally to close relatives, not to distant ones; and the phrase *dal'nie rodnye*, unlike *dal'nie rodstvenniki* 'distant relatives', sounds ludicrous.

But the phrase *blizkie rodnye*, unlike *blizkie rodstvenniki* 'close relatives', is also very odd, at least as odd as the phrase *close immediate family* would sound in English: *rodnye*, like *immediate family*, are, by definition, very close to us, and this closeness cannot be qualified in any way because it is seen as an absolute, an existential given.

In principle, *rodstvenniki*—like *relatives* in English—refers to people who are not members of the immediate family, whereas *rodnye* refers primarily to the immediate family. In certain special contexts, the words *rodstvenniki* and *relatives* can be used more broadly, in a way which would include family, and *rodnye* can be extended to people outside the family; but prototypically, *rodstvenniki* (like *relatives*) focuses

on those outside the family, whereas the opposite is true for *rodnye*. Furthermore, *rodnye* implies closeness, emotional attachment, belonging, whereas *rodstvenniki* has no such implications.

Although it is cognate with the verb *rodit'* 'give birth', and although it is roughly coextensive with *sem'ja* 'family' (in its broader sense, including not only parents and children but also brothers, sisters, and grandparents, as well as various in-laws), the concept of *rodnye* is defined, primarily, in existential and emotional terms rather than in biological or legal ones. From this point of view, being a member of the same household may be more important than being related by blood. For example, for Nataša Rostova (in Tolstoy's *War and peace*), her cousin Sonja, who is being raised by Nataša's parents together with their own children, belongs undoubtedly to her *rodnye*—probably more so than her own married older sister Vera, who is no longer a member of the same household.

It is perceptive, therefore, of Taube's (1978) Russian-English dictionary to offer the Russian word *domašnie* (from *dom* 'house', 'members of the same household') as a synonym of *rodnye*. The two words (*rodnye* and *domašnie*) do not mean exactly the same, but in a sense they are closer than *rodnye* and *rodstvenniki* ('relatives'). It is also perceptive of another Russian-English dictionary (Wheeler 1972) to illustrate the meaning of *rodnye* with the phrase *v krugu rodnyx*, literally 'in the circle of *rodnye*', glossed as 'in the family circle, with one's people': the phrase *v krugu* 'in the circle' suggests a group of people who are often together, who sit around the same table, and who share their life, as well as their meals. For this image, being a member of the same household (though not necessary either) may be more important than being a close blood relative.

> Bolezn' Nataši byla tak ser'ezna, čto, k sčast'ju ee i k sčast'ju ee rodnyx, mysl' o vsem tom, čto bylo pričinoj ee bolezni, ee postupok i razryv s ženixom, perešli na vtoroj plan. . . . Čto že by delali Sonja, graf, i grafinja, kak by oni smotreli na slabuju, tosčuju Natašu, ničego ne predprinimaja, esli by ne bylo ètix piljul' po časam, pit'ja teplen'kogo, kurinoj kotletki i vsex podrobnostej žizni predpisannyx doktorom, sobljudat' kotorye sostavljalo zanjatie i utešenie dlja okružajuščix? (Tolstoy 1964:60–62)
>
> 'Natasha's illness was so serious that, fortunately for her and for her parents [*rodnye*] all thought of what had caused it, of her conduct and the breaking off of the engagement, receded into the background. . . . What would have become of Sonya and the count and countess if they had had nothing to do but look at Natasha, weak and fading away—if there had not been those pills to give by the clock, the warm drinks to prepare, the chicken cutlets, and all the other details ordered by the doctors, which supplied occupation and consolation to all of them. The stricter and more complicated the doctor's orders, the more comfort did those around her find in carrying them out.' (Tolstoy 1930–1931:776–778)

Another image which may be helpful here is that of a nest: one's *rodnye* are like people who form one's existential "nest". This nest provides one with existential and emotional support, warmth, and a frame of orientation and belonging—not just in childhood but throughout one's life.

Given the double, existential and emotional, bond implied by the word *rodnye*, the English expression *nearest and dearest* gives a better idea of what this concept really involves than the cold descriptive term *relatives*, although the strength of the bond implied by the Russian word is much greater. In English, people often make disparaging comments about their relatives, as reflected, for instance, in the celebrated linguistic example of a sentence with two possible syntactic interpretations:

Visiting relatives can be a nuisance.

In Russian, a sentence of this kind could only be translated with the word *rodstvenniki*, not with the word *rodnye*. From a Russian perspective, *rodnye* are, by definition, beloved and indispensable, not a nuisance, and they are beloved not because of any personal attraction or preference but simply because they are an inalienable part of one's own life. I am not saying that from a Russian perspective relatives are necessarily "beloved," but only that *rodnye* are. One CAN speak about relatives in Russian in a cold or hostile manner, but the word which would be used for this would be *rodstvenniki*, not *rodnye*.

Ja terpet' ne mogu moix rodstvennikov/? rodnyx.

'I can't stand my relatives.'

Even the ironic definition of the concept *rodnye*, offered by the cynical narrator of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, confirms this:

Pozvol'te: možet byt', ugodno
Teper' uznat' vam ot menja
Čto značit imenno *rodnye*.
Rodnye ljudi vot kakie:
My ix objazany laskat',
Ljubit', duševno uvažat'
I, po obyčaju naroda,
O roždestve ix navešcat'
Ili po počte pozdravljat',
Čtob ostal'noe vremja goda
Ne dumali o nas oni . . .
Itak, daj bog im dolgi dni!

'Perhaps you would like
to learn from me now
what "kinsfolk" [*rodnye*] means exactly?
Well, here's what kinsfolk are:
we are required to cosset them,
love them, esteem them cordially,
and, following popular custom,
at Christmas time, visit them,
or send them postal greetings,
so that for the rest of the year
they will not think about us.
So grant them, God, long life!
(Pushkin 1975:184)

The warm, emotive character of the word *rodnye* is also reflected in the fact that—unlike *relatives* or *rodstvenniki*—it can be used as an endearment, that is, as a form of address, as in the loving graffitti scratched out on prison walls in the following example:

Vernuvšis' v kameru, ja stal čitat' nadpisi, nacarapannye na narax, na stenax i na podokonnike. Po bol'šej časti èto byli obraščenia k materi, žene ili detjam; obyčno oni končalis' slovami: proščajte, rodnye, na tri goda ili na pjat' let, itp. (Amal'rik 1970:51).

'When I came back to the cell, I started to read the graffitti scratched on the bunks, on the walls, and on the window sill. For the most part, these were addressed to mothers, wives, or children; and usually they ended with the words: goodbye, *rodnye*, I won't see you for three years, or for five years, etc.'

Although it is impossible to be quite sure whether *rodnye* is meant here as a noun or as an adjective, its use as an endearment standing on its own is none the less quite telling.

The word *rodstvenniki* (in contrast to *rodnye*) is also used in contexts where for some reason the speaker wishes to speak about relatives in a fully detached, objective manner.

Consider, for example, the following dialogue (Litvinova 1994b:11), in which the words *rodnye* and *rodstvenniki* are used in close succession (the speakers are a KGB officer and the dissident Larissa Bogoraz, whose husband, a human rights campaigner, Anatolij Marčenko, is on the verge of death in a Soviet prison):

ON: My predlagaem vam drugoj vyxod—nemedlenno podat' zajavlenie ob èmigracii v Izrail' vašej sem'i—muža, syna, i vas.

L: . . . ja dolžna obsudit' vaše predloženie s rodnymi i druz'jami.

ON: S synom Pašej?

L: I s nim, i so staršim synom.

ON: No ved' on tože možet vyexat' v Izrail'. U ego ženy tam rodstvenniki.

L: Rodstvennikov net. . . .

'HE: We would suggest a different solution: that you apply immediately for emigration to Israel for your family—your husband, your son, and yourself.

L: I would need to discuss your suggestion with my *rodnye* and *druz'ja* (family and friends).

HE: With your son Paša?

L: With him too, and with my older son.

HE: But you know, he, too, can go to Israel. His wife has relatives [*rodstvenniki*] there.

L: No, she doesn't.

Thus, Larissa's sons are for her *rodnye* with whom she wants to consult before taking any important decision concerning herself and her family; clearly, they are not in the same category as some presumed relatives of her daughter-in-law.

The phrase *rodnye i druzja* used in this passage is also very characteristic and very common in Russian: given the strength and the warmth of the word *druzja*, and

the marked coolness and detachment of the word *rodstvenniki*, a phrase conjoining the two (*?rodstvenniki i druzja*) would sound odd. Interestingly, even the phrase *semja i druzja* 'family and friends' sounds less felicitous than *rodnye i druzja*, presumably because *semja* doesn't have the connotations of an emotional bond that both *rodnye* and *druzja* share. But the fact that Russian—unlike English or even Polish—has a separate word for one's close relatives seen in that "nearest-and-dearest," "insepara-ble-and-inalienable" perspective, is culturally revealing. One is reminded in this context of the Russian proverb cited in Dal''s 1955[1882] dictionary of Russian, "Russkij čelovek bez rodni ne živet," roughly "Russians can't live without their kinfolk," and also of various social commentaries emphasizing the importance of family ties in Russia.[9]

But while the word *rodnye* reflects and documents the perceived value of close family ties in Russian culture, it also shows that the boundary between kin and non-kin can be blurred: what is really essential is the existence of enduring and unconditional emotional ties, which are perceived as an important aspect of one's identity, rather than "blood relations" as such. This is why the gloss "one's people," offered for *rodnye* by some Russian-English dictionaries in preference to the less imaginative "relatives" captures the meaning of this word better. In addition, this gloss provides also some insight into the semantic link between the noun *rodnye* and the adjective *rodnoj* (in the plural *rodnye*), although the phrase "one's own people" would be even better, as a parallel to the phrase "one's own" often used by dictionaries to describe one of the meanings of the adjective *rodnoj*.

Usually, dictionaries ascribe three different meanings to the adjective *rodnoj* (fem. *rodnaja*); for example, Wheeler (1972) offers the following glosses:

1. own (by blood relationship in direct line), *rodnoj brat* 'one's brother' (as opposed to cousin, etc.)

2. native, e.g. *rodnaja strana* 'native land', *rodnoj jazyk* 'mother tongue'

3. (as a form of address) (my) dear.

Descriptions of this kind, though useful as a first approximation, do not really explain what is conveyed by this adjective in any one of the following sentences (Dal' 1955[1882]):

Ja prišel k mysli, čto ne po krovi ljudi ljubjat drug druga, ne po rodstvu oni *rodnye* i blizkie, a po duše, po serdečnoj svjazi. (Gladkov).

'I have come to think that people don't love one another because of blood ties, that they are not *rodnye* and close because of kinship, but because of the heart [soul], because of ties of affection.'

Esli svoju dal'nejšuju žizn' Doronin ne predstavljal bez služby v armii, to i svoju voennuju službu on ne predstavljal vne rjadov *rodnoj* divizii. (Čakovskij).

'If Doronin couldn't imagine his future life outside the army, nor could he imagine his military service outside his *rodnaja* division.'

Ax njanja, sdelaj odolžen'e.—Izvol', rodnaja, prikaži.
(Pushkin).

"'Oh, nurse, do me a favor."
"Of course, darling [*rodnaja*], just tell me.'"

A *rodnaja* division (in the army) is not one to which one is "related by blood in direct line," or one where one was born, or a form of address. Rather, it is a division of which one feels a part, which, furthermore, one perceives as an inalienable part of one's life, and to which one feels bound "by one's heart" ("po duše, po serdečnoj svjazi").

The same assumptions are also part of the adjective *rodnoj* (fem. *rodnaja*) when it is used as a term of address, which is why when Pushkin's heroine Tatjana addresses her old nanny as *rodnaja*, this form of address means infinitely more than "dear." When this adjective is used as a form of address outside the family, and outside the domestic circle, its great emotional strength is also linked with the implications of belonging, a total lack of distance, and the existence of ties felt to be absolute and unseverable.

The land where one was born (*rodnaja strana*), the language spoken in that land (*rodnoj jazyk*), the family one was born into (*rodnoj otec, rodnaja mat', rodnye bratja, rodnye sestry*), all these things define (from a Russian cultural perspective) who one is and where one's heart is going to be. These cultural assumptions are reflected in the semantics of both the adjective *rodnoj* and the noun *rodnye*. One's *rodnye* are people who are related to one by ties that cannot be severed and whom one values and cherishes as an inalienable part of one's life and one's identity, people to whom one is "attached" both existentially and emotionally in some absolute sense.

As a first approximation, then, I would propose the following (partial) explication of this key concept:

(my) rodnye
(a) I think about these people like this:
(b)   these people are like a part of me
(c)   I am like a part of these people
(d)   it cannot be otherwise
(e) when I think about these people, I feel something very good

It has often been suggested that the importance of friendship in a society grows as the family ties weaken. But in Russia, both friendship and family ties appear to be valued very highly (at least from an Anglo perspective). Words such as *rodnye* and *druzja* support the view that "Russians ... value warm interpersonal relations to an unusually high degree" (Bauer, Inkeles & Kluckhohn 1956:110), and that this applies to family and friends alike. The survival of these words as key Russian words supports the view that in Russia, as in many other countries, certain basic personality patterns and patterns of interpersonal relations have a tendency to be enduring despite sweeping changes in politics, economy, and social structures.[10]

4. Patterns of "friendship" in Polish culture

The area of human relations which is covered in English by the term *friend* is divided in Polish into three different categories, corresponding to three nouns (all of them very common in everyday speech). These nouns are *przyjaciel* (glossed by Polish-English dictionaries as "friend"), *kolega* (cognate to, and in some uses corresponding to, the English word *colleague*), and *znajomy* (derived from *znać* 'to know', and glossed by Polish-English dictionaries as "acquaintance"). It could be objected that—leaving aside more or less "slangy" words such as *pal*, *chum*, and *buddy* (which will be discussed later)—English has two nouns, not one, for classifying the semantic area under discussion: *friend* and *acquaintance*. But in fact, *acquaintance* is only a marginal word in colloquial English. Its frequency is very low and the range of syntactic frames in which it can appear is also quite limited. For example, while one can say

She is an old acquaintance of mine.

one can hardly use this word referentially:

? I talked about it with an acquaintance of mine.
? I had lunch with two acquaintances.

There are no similar limitations on the use of the Polish word *znajomy*.

Since each of the three Polish nouns listed above has its counterpart of the feminine gender—*przyjaciółka*, *koleżanka*, and *znajoma*—it could be argued that Polish provides a basic grid with six rather than three categories in the area of *friend*. Unlike the Russian pair *drug* and *podruga*, however, Polish pairs such as *przyjaciel* and *przyjaciółka* do not exhibit any semantic differences in addition to gender and can be regarded as purely grammatical variants of the same lexical unit.

In examining these three Polish "folk categories," the social anthropologist Janine Wedel (1986) writes: "Apart from family, in general Poles maintain contact with *przyjaciele* (close friends), *koledzy* (colleagues from school, work or other common experiences) and *znajomi* (acquaintances)" (103). And, "Family, very close friends, colleagues and 'good acquaintances' are the four types of individuals Poles invite into their homes for dinner or 'parties'" (112).

Assuming, then, that in Polish the basic lexical grid for interpersonal relations (apart from family) has three categories, not six (*przyjaciel, kolega,* and *znajomy*), I will note that this is still three times as many as English (with its cover-all category of *friend*), though not quite as many as Russian (with its five basic lexical categories of *drug, podruga, prijatel', tovarišč,* and *znakomyj*). This suggests that Polish culture places a greater emphasis on different types of interpersonal relations than Anglo culture but doesn't go quite as far in this direction as Russian culture. This is consistent with the implications of the different systems of expressive derivation of names, with both Polish and Russian systems being much more highly developed than the English one, but with Russian having an even more elaborate system than Polish.

To give the reader some idea of how common the three Polish words under discussion are, I will adduce some data from frequency dictionaries. In Carroll et al.'s

(1971) dictionary of English, the frequency of *friend* is 226 to 1 million running words, whereas that of *colleague* is 6, and of *acquaintance* 5, and the corresponding figures in Kučera and Francis (1967) are 298, 32, and 9. In the Kurcz et al. (1990) dictionary of Polish, the frequency of *przyjaciel* (and *przyjaciółka*) is 132, that of *kolega* (and *koleżanka*) 242, and that of *znajomy* (and *znajoma*) 46.

Of course (as mentioned earlier), frequency data of this kind are only broadly indicative and can only be taken as an approximation. Nonetheless, they strongly support native speakers' intuitive impression that in English, *friend* is a very common word, whereas *colleague* and *acquaintance* are not; and also, that in Polish all three words (*kolega*, *przyjaciel*, and *znajomy*) are common, though not to the same degree, with *kolega* being the most common one in the group.

4.1   *Koledzy* (Masc. Pl.) and *koleżanki* (Fem. Pl.)

The *Kościuszko Foundation dictionary* (1959–1961) glosses the word *kolega* as "fellow companion; comrade, (in an institution etc.) colleague; (among workers) mate; *colloquial* buddy." It also offers glosses for two common collocations: *serdeczny* (Adj. from *serce* 'heart') *kolega*—"chum," and *kolega szkolny* (adj. from *szkoła* 'school')—"classmate."

As this rather heterogeneous collection of glosses suggests, *kolega* is really quite a different concept from the English *colleague*. Not only is it—unlike *colleague*—a very common everyday word, but its sphere of application is very wide, ranging from "chums" and "buddies" through ordinary classmates (among schoolchildren) and "mates" (among workers) to professional colleagues.

Like the English concept of 'friend', the Polish concept of 'kolega' can cover a wide range of degrees of closeness and intimacy, from very close to very distant. The difference is that Polish, unlike English, does have a separate word for a relation involving a high degree of closeness and intimacy, namely, *przyjaciel*. The wide range of use of the word *kolega*, therefore, does not suggest that closeness and intimacy are not perceived as sufficiently important in Polish culture to merit lexicalization but rather that there are some other values in this culture which are also perceived as extremely important.

Since the most common use of the words *koledzy* (Masc. Pl.) and *koleżanki* (Fem. Pl.) is no doubt with reference to schoolchildren and university students, it is natural to look for a clue to the core values reflected in these words in this use; and the clue offered by this most common use is clear: *koledzy* are equals who are doing the same things and doing them together. For example, classmates are students of equal rank who are "doing the same things" (studying) in the same place (at school).

In the case of *koledzy*, however, the "equality of rank" is not interpreted as specifically as in the case of *classmates*. Normally, it is assumed that one's *koledzy* are from the same grade, but a *starszy kolega* (literally 'an older *kolega*', i.e. a boy from a higher grade) is also possible; and at the university, *koledzy* can be at different stages of their university career. What really matters, then, is not equal age but equal status; and this equal status has to be based on shared activities within some sort of institutional framework.

The idea of shared activities is one of the dimensions which distinguish the Polish concept of 'koledzy' from the Russian concept of 'tovarišči'. Although at school, a Polish boy has a set of *koledzy* (classmates), and a Russian boy, a set of *tovarišči*, and although both these words refer to equal status and to shared life experiences, for the Russian concept, the most important thing is that the same things HAPPEN to the whole group, whereas for the Polish concept, the most important thing is that the whole group DOES the same things.

This is why in Russian one can also speak of *tovarišči po nesčastju* ('fellow-sufferers' or 'comrades in misfortune') or *tovarišči po kamere* 'fellow prisoners', whereas the Polish word *koledzy* cannot be used in such contexts. For example, to refer to one's "fellow sufferers" one would have to say in Polish *towarzysze w nieszczęściu*, not **koledzy w nieszczęściu*. The Polish word *towarzysz*, cognate with the Russian *tovarišč*, can be used in such contexts, but it is a much more marginal word in modern Polish and is not used for describing "normal" human relations such as those prevailing in schools, universities, army, or the workplace. In Polish, one speaks of *koledzy z pracy* 'koledzy from work', *koledzy z wojska* 'koledzy from the army', *koledzy szkolni* 'koledzy from school', and so on, not *towarzysze z pracy, z wojska*, or *ze szkoły* (from work, the army, or school).

The shared institutional framework mentioned earlier is also important, which is why English words such as *buddy* or *chum* mentioned by the Kościuszko dictionary can be misleading as glosses for *kolega* (although there is also in Polish an expressive word *koleś*, derived from *kolega*, which jocularly extends the use of *kolega* outside institutional frameworks, and which can indeed be loosely compared with *buddy*).

Of course, the main difference between *chum* or *buddy* on the one hand and *kolega* on the other is sociolinguistic rather than semantic: the former two are (more or less) slang words, whereas the latter has no links with slang whatsoever. In addition, however, there are also important semantic differences, which illuminate certain aspects of the meaning of *kolega*.

First, *buddy* implies an exclusive relationship based on personal preferences and restricted to a very small number of participants (typically, two), whereas *kolega* applies to an entire set of equals within a certain institutional framework, regardless of any personal preferences. *Chum* doesn't necessarily imply an exclusive relationship, but it, too, implies a degree of personal attraction and personal preference. Consequently, one's relations with one's *buddies* or one's *chums* are, by definition, good: if they spoil, the *buddies* cease to be *buddies*, and the *chums* cease to be *chums*. By contrast, one's relations with one's *koledzy*, while expected to be good, can also be bad, because this relationship is defined by the institutional framework, not by personal choice.

Importantly, in institutional frameworks there are many people in the same position. In this sense, being a *kolega* is not a private, interpersonal relationship but a social relationship, defined with reference to a whole social group. Even when a waiter in a cafe (in "People's Poland") tried to fob off an exasperated customer, after a long wait, with the customary phrase *kolega załatwi* 'a kolega will take your order', there was an implicit reference to the establishment as a whole, with a set of employees with equal status and the same duties.[11]

This is not to say, however, that *kolega* has no affective component. Although one's *koledzy* are not personally chosen but are given to one within a certain institutional framework, the word carries an implication of solidarity and mutual good feelings: even if my relations with my *koledzy* happen to be poor, or temporarily soured, nonetheless the word still carries an implication that when I think of them 'I feel something good' (although these "good feelings" may be mixed with temporary "bad feelings").

The solidarity with one's *koledzy* is based on the perception that within a certain framework we are all equals, that we do the same things, and that I know these people well (though not necessarily very well), and with a kind of concomitant group identification: 'these people are people like me'.

All these considerations lead us to the following explication:

(my) koledzy
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
(b)   these people are people like me
(c)   I know these people well
(d)   I do many things in one place
(e)   these people are often in the same place
(f)   these people do the same things as I
(g)   I think these people think the same about me
(h) when people think like this about other people, they feel something good
(i) I think like this about these people

In this explication I have not used a format starting with the component 'I think about this person/these people like this' in order to account for the fact that *koledzy* can be either people with whom "I DO the same things, in the same place" or people with whom "I DID (have done) the same things, in the same place." Since the relationship is conceptualized as unitary, whether it has its basis in the present or in the past, I don't want to use a disjunction in the explication ("I do or I did"). The phrasing suggested here overcomes this difficulty: the prototypical *koledzy* relationship refers to the present situation (components [d], [e], [f]); at the same time component (i) indicates that I see my own relationship with some people (my *koledzy*) in the same light, without actually implying that I do now the same things as those people do.

The explication proposed here, therefore, is consistent with the fact that phrases such as *koledzy z wojska* '*koledzy* from the army' or *koledzy ze studiów* '*koledzy* from the university' may refer to relationships rooted in the past.

This analysis of the concept of *koledzy*, corresponds, on the whole, quite closely to that proposed, from a different perspective, by Wedel (1986):

> *Koledzy* are colleagues brought together by formal organizations or common experience. *Koledzy* can be close friends—often those with whom one forms lasting bonds. But *koledzy* and *koleżanki* (the female form of *koledzy*) are also everyone with whom one works, even if one started work one week ago. *Koledzy* are relationships formed through an institutional base or common experience. Hence, schoolgirls have *koledzy* or *koleżanki* from school; university students have *koledzy* or *koleżanki* from the university; most adults have *koledzy* or *koleżanki* from work; many people over 50

have *koledzy* or *koleżanki* from the war or the resistance; and almost all males 18 years of age and older have *koledzy* from the army. (105)

The only aspect of Wedel's analysis that I would disagree with is that concerning the permanence of the *koledzy* relationship:

> People are *koledzy* and *koleżanki* for life, years after the formal organization or common experience that first made them so no longer brings them together.
>
> Poles who lived through the war together, comrades in the underground or the Warsaw uprising developed special *koledzy* relationships. *Koledzy* and *koleżanki* from school or work from days past often operate as "old boy networks," relying on each other to solve problems. Though *koledzy* and *przyjaciele* are people through whom one can *załatwić sprawy* [get things arranged], these relationships are often of a moral quality, as in family relationships. *Koledzy* may now be engaged in vastly different pursuits, yet they continue to meet getting together for drinking parties, reunions and nameday celebrations. In some cases their ties may be even stronger than kin ties.
>
> A 50-year-old professor of mathematics still meets frequently with her *koleżanki* from secondary school for coffee klatsch and nameday celebrations. She has a higher position than her *koleżanki*, but they all belong to one *środowisko*. Likewise, a 62-year-old working class man meets often with his *koledzy* from a World War II underground resistance organization. (105–106)

It is quite true that people are often *koledzy* and *koleżanki* for life. But the concept as such implies, roughly speaking, equality within an institutional framework, without necessarily implying permanence: whether or not the bond will be regarded as permanent depends on the importance of a given institutional framework in people's lives. In this respect, therefore, the bond of *koleżeństwo* (abstract noun derived from *kolega*) is not like the family bond.

Nonetheless the salient role of this kind of relationship in Polish culture, reflected in the prominent place of the words *koledzy* and *koleżanki* in the Polish lexicon (alongside *rodzina*, *przyjaciele*, and *znajomi*), calls for an explanation. I believe that such an explanation can be found in Poland's history and, in particular, in the concept of the "noble ethos," expounded particularly well by the British historian Norman Davies (1984):

> Of all the products of Polish life before the Partitions, the Polish nobility—the *Szlachta* and all their works—might seem to have been the most discredited. . . . In fact, though the legal status of *szlachta* was annulled in 1795 by the partitioning powers, its ideals lived on. The *kultura szlachecka* (the noble ethos) has become one of the central features of the modern Polish outlook.
>
> As it happened, the annulment of *szlachta*'s legal status rendered a signal service to their reputation . . . The mass of the *déclassé* nobility shared the misfortunes of the common people, and, as the main educated element, could act as their tribunes. What is more, in mourning the fate of their own defunct estate, they could interpret the attacks on their own battered ideals as an assault on the beliefs of the entire population. In this way, the ex-*szlachta* became the pioneers of the new intelligentsia; the former 'noble nation' was transformed and expanded to include all social classes of the new, universal Polish nation; and the *kultura szlachecka*—with its ideas of exclusivity,

equality, unanimity, resistance, and individualism—continued to provide the guide-
lines for Polish social and political thought. In the old days, only the *Szlachta* could
address each other as *pan* (Lord) or *pani* (Lady). Nowadays, it is the normal form of
address for everyone. Two hundred years after the formal abolition of the *Szlachta*
most people in Poland are content to think of themselves as honorary nobles.
(331–333)

Most important in the present context is the *Szlachta's* old ideal of equality (within
their own class). Having described the *Szlachta's* deplorable attitudes labeled some-
times as "Noble Racism" and "Vanity of Birth," Davies goes on:

> More attractively perhaps, the *Szlachta* were devoted to the principle of treating each
> other as equals. All noblemen called each other 'Brother'. Except for the princes of
> Lithuania, whose titles had to be confirmed to gain their acceptance to the Union of
> Lublin, all titulation in the old Republic was legally banned. All noble citizens,
> irrespective of wealth or office, enjoyed the same civil liberties, and full equality
> before the Law. Phrases implying that some nobles were more equal than others—
> such as 'magnate' or 'lesser nobility'—were struck from the record of the Diet. No
> one could seriously contend that all members of the *Szlachta* were equal in all respects,
> since the gamut of wealth and power was enormous. But the final fiction of equality
> was an important social lubricant, which added greatly to the sense of solidarity within
> the broad mass of the nobility as a whole. After the partitions, the ex-nobles shared
> the 'democracy' of the oppressed and the deprived—where the old ideal could be
> preserved in new forms. (333)

I would suggest that the old ideal of the "solidarity of equals" (within the confines
of one social group) has found its expression in the key Polish concept of *koledzy* (and
koleżanki.)

Speaking of the ideal of the "solidarity of equals," it is impossible not to think
of the name of the Polish Solidarity union and the Solidarity movement of
1980–1981, which is widely believed to have initiated the process of the collapse
of communism in Eastern Europe. It would be difficult to doubt that the rush of
nationwide popular support for Solidarity had something to do with the fact that
the ideal referred to in this name struck a vital chord in the Polish national psyche.
As Norman Davies (1981) wrote, perceptively and sympathetically, at the time:
"The Polish working class can be seen to be reviving the political traditions of the
Noble Democracy—traditions which appear to have survived almost two hundred
years of suppression" (724). The fact that in Polish the concept of *koledzy*, with
its emphasis on equality and solidarity of existentially linked free individuals, has
become a key concept in the national folk-philosophy is also a reflection of the
strength of those traditions.

The word *kolega* is, of course, a loan word in Polish, as *colleague* is in English.
But the fact that on Polish soil this loan word has greatly expanded its range of use
(and its meaning) and has turned into one of the language's key words for categorizing
human relations suggests that there was something in its meaning which tallied well
with the Polish ethos.

In English, the word *colleague* (which, as we have seen, has a very low frequency
anyway) is restricted to professional elites, and it doesn't have the implications of

"shared existence" characteristic of the Polish *kolega*. Its meaning can be explicated as follows:

(my) colleagues

(a) I think about these people like this:
(b)   these people are people like me
(c)   these people do things of the same kind as I do
(d)   not many other people do things of this kind
(e)   I think something good about these people
(f)   I think these people know a lot about some things
(g)   because of this, these people can do things of this kind
(h) I think these people think the same about me

The first two components of this explication, as well as the last one, are essentially the same as in the explication of the Polish word *koledzy*, but the other ones are different. In particular, component (d) points to the somewhat elitist connotations of the word *colleague*, (e) to the respect implied by it, and (f) and (g) to its professional implications. On the other hand, this explication does not include the components of familiarity ('I know these people well'), of affection ('when I think about these people, I feel something good'), or of an existential bond, based on doing things together in the same place that is characteristic of the Polish concept of 'koledzy' (cf. components [d]–[f] in the explication of this word). Furthermore, the word *colleagues* does not embrace the past in the way *koledzy* does: whereas in Polish, people with a shared past may well be referred to as *koledzy*, in English, people from one's past are usually referred to as "former colleagues" rather than simply "colleagues." This is why the explication of *colleagues* can start with the component 'I think about these people like this', whereas that of *koledzy* needs to be done via a prototype.

Since the original meaning of the French word *collègue* (and the Latin *collega*) was similarly restricted to privileged elites and didn't have the existential implications of *kolega*, one could say that within Polish this word has both increased in "existential weight" and undergone far-reaching democratization.

Nonetheless, the salience of the concept 'kolega', with its emphasis on equality, in Polish language and Polish culture should not be taken to mean that the Polish ethos is superegalitarian (in the way, for example, the Australian ethos is). As Wedel (1986) rightly emphasizes, the concept of 'koledzy' celebrates the equality of people who share the same status, and so, in a way, it emphasizes, rather than de-emphasizes, differences between different social statuses:

> For example, a professor at the university is on very friendly terms with her secretary. While on vacation in Romania and Bulgaria, they have met several times, the professor taking the secretary out to dinner. The secretary did not elect to take sick leave from work (to the amazement of her physician) even when she was quite ill. She felt obligated to finish a typing job, even working overtime without extra pay, to meet her boss's deadline. Despite their affection and respect for one another . . . they will not become *koleżanki* (colleagues) or refer to each other as *ty*. The two women appreciate the difference in their status, which will remain clearly defined. Though it is often in the best interest of both parties to establish a personal relationship, this by no means blurs the distinct social hierarchical structure. (111)

Observations of this kind tally well with the wide use of professional titles in Polish, especially as forms of address (e.g. *Panie Profesorze* 'Mr. Professor', *Panie Doktorze* 'Mr. Doctor', *Panie Inżynierze* 'Mr. Engineer', *Panie Mecenasie* 'Mr. Lawyer', *Panie Naczelniku* 'Mr. Head', and so on; cf. e.g. Bogusławski 1990), which Poles themselves often ridicule as the Polish *tytułomania* 'mania for titles'.

In the passage adduced earlier, Norman Davies mentions that in the past, all Polish nobles called each other "Brother." Speaking more precisely, they commonly called each other *Panie Bracie,* that is, so to speak, "Lord Brother," thus emphasizing both their equality and their status. The modern Polish word *kolega,* which can also be used as a title, has a similar double point: while it seems to emphasize equality more than status, it still celebrates both: equality AND status, or equality within a certain status.

4.2   *Przyjaciel* ('close friend')

Przyjaciel (the feminine counterpart *przyjaciółka*) is normally glossed by Polish-English dictionaries as "friend," but in fact it means much more. Eva Hoffman (1989), writing from the perspective of a Polish teenager transplanted with her family to North America, comments on these differences:

> I trust Penny to explain some of these things to me. She is a happy, bouncy young person, curly haired and ruddy cheeked, and she is the smart girl in class, the one who always gets the best grades. Penny is a native Vancouverite, and Vancouver, as far as she is concerned, is the best place on earth, though I, of course, know that it is Cracow. We like each other quite well, though I'm not sure that what is between us is "friendship"—a word which in Polish has connotations of strong loyalty and attachment bordering on love. At first, I try to preserve the distinction between "friends" and "acquaintances" scrupulously, because it feels like a small lie to say "friend" when you don't really mean it, but after a while, I give it up. "Friend," in English, is such a good-natured, easygoing sort of term, covering all kinds of territory, and "acquaintance" is something an uptight, snobbish kind of person might say. . . .
> As the word is used here, Penny is certainly a friend, and we spend many hours together, gossiping about our classmates and teachers and futures. And, of course, about dates. (148)

Clearly, the Polish words that Hoffman has in mind are *przyjaciel* (Masc.), *przyjaciółka* (Fem.), and *przyjaźń* (abstract noun); and trying to show how these "more weighty" words differ from the "good-natured," "easygoing" English word *friend,* she mentions "strong loyalty and attachment bordering on love." Other commentators concur in the view that *przyjaciel* "means more" than *friend,* but try to explain the difference in other terms. For example, the Polish sociologist Stefan Nowak (quoted in Wedel 1986) emphasizes the readiness and, indeed, obligation to help as one important function of "friends" in Polish culture:

> When Americans say about someone "he is my best friend," at the most we can say that the Polish equivalent of that is "good acquaintance." That which would correspond with friendship in our understanding is simply lacking in many cultures. To our friends we can go for help in many difficult situations and, in relation to them, we are obligated to offer help. A lot of Poles would go very far both in their

expectations of real help and in terms of offering such help to their friends. Having a circle of *przyjaciele* increases the feeling of safety, both in psychological as well as in very "practical" aspects of life. (104)

But while both Hoffman's and Nowak's remarks are apt and valid as sociological comments, the meaning of *przyjaciel* (and *przyjaciółka*) is, I think, even more clearly illuminated by the following examples of use from Polish literature quoted in the *Dictionary of the Polish language* (SJP):

Miałem serdecznego przyjaciela, który, jak sądzę, otwierał przede mną swoją duszę na oścież. (Świętochowski)

'I had a close *przyjaciel*, who, I believe, used to fully open his heart (soul) to me.'

Przyjaźń prawdziwa tylko tam istnieć może, gdzie pomiędzy przyjaciołmi [przyjaciłmi] istnieje ustawiczne i nieprzerwane porozumienie. (Kaczkowski).

'True *przyjaźń* (friendship) can exist only where there is constant communication and understanding between the *przyjaciele*.'

Nie lubiła zwierzeń i nie miała przyjaciółki pomiędzy koleżankami, z którymi żyła na stopie pewnej wyniosłści. (Reymont)

'She didn't like confidences and she had no *przyjaciółka* among her *koleżanki*, from whom she maintained a somewhat haughty distance.'

Zrób ze mnie swoją powiernicę, przyjaciółkę: miej do mnie zaufanie, jak do własnej matki. (Sewer)

'Make me your confidante, your *przyjaciółka*: trust me, like your own mother.'

What these examples highlight is the assumption of a "special relationship" based on "intimate communication." Compare also the comment made by the poet Czesław Miłosz (1972:147) about another Polish writer, Ksawery Pruszyński:

Stosunki nasze były kordialne, ale nie zasługiwały na miano przyjaźni. Prowadziliśmy czasem zupełnie szczere rozmowy, ograniczone jednak do polityki; inny wymiar, który mnie interesował, był Ksaweremu obcy.

'Our relations were cordial, but they did not deserve the name of friendship [*przyjaźń*]. We sometimes had long talks which were completely open, but they were restricted to politics; another dimension, which interested me, was alien to Ksawery.'

This assumption of a "special relationship based on an intimate communication" can be represented along the following lines (as in the explication of the earlier meaning of *friend*):

(my) przyjaciel/przyjaciółka
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
(b)   I know this person very well
(c)   I think good things about this person
(d)   often when I think something, I can't say it to other people
(e)   I can say it to this person

(f)   I want this person to know what I think
(g)   I want this person to know what I feel
(h)   I think this person thinks the same about me
(i)   I think like this about this person
(j)   I don't think like this about many other people
(k) when I think about this person, I feel something very good

As for the "strong loyalty" mentioned by Hoffman and the "obligation to offer help" mentioned by Nowak, I believe that they simply follow, or can be seen as following, from the defining components of this relationship spelled out above. In particular, I would argue that *przyjaciel*—unlike the Russian *drug*—does not embody assumptions about mutual help as a necessary part of the concept. The members of one's *rodzina* ('family'), too, are expected to provide help, but this expectation has not found its way into the very meaning of the word *rodzina*; and I think the same is true of *przyjaciel*.

It is difficult to prove the absence of a component, of course, and the onus should be on the person who would wish to argue that such a component is necessarily included. Nonetheless, I can point to some differences in the collocations of *drug* and *przyjaciel* which suggest that the meanings of these two words differ in this respect.

To begin with, we should note that the most common collocations of the Polish word are *bliski* ('close') *przyjaciel*, *najbliższy* ('the closest') *przyjaciel*, and *serdeczny* (Adjective from *serce* 'heart') *przyjaciel*. What these collocations imply is something like intimacy and affection.

Similar collocations are also characteristic of *drug*; in addition, however, *drug* has a different set of collocations, referring to something like "reliability in need" (such as *nadežnyj drug* 'reliable *drug*' and *ispytannyj drug* 'tested *drug*'). In fact, phrases such as *nastojaščij drug* or *istinnyj drug* 'true *drug*' would normally be interpreted in Russian as referring to reliability in need. By contrast, the Polish phrase *prawdziwy przyjaciel* 'true *przyjaciel*' would normally be interpreted as referring to "true closeness" (linked with a true baring of hearts and sharing of hidden thoughts), rather than to "true reliability."

Even the parallel collocations *wierny przyjaciel* and *vernyj drug* 'faithful friend' would tend to have somewhat different interpretations. The Polish phrase would be likely to be taken to refer to someone who is constant in maintaining the relationship and doesn't discontinue it in changed circumstances, whereas the Russian phrase would be more likely to be taken to refer to someone who is constant in his or her support and help in need.[12]

In addition to the differences in collocations and in the interpretation of comparable collocations, it is also noteworthy that Polish has no phrase corresponding to *bud'drugom* ('be a *drug*'), which in Russian introduces a request for help. This is not to say, of course, that in Poland people don't expect to receive help from their *przyjaciele*, or to offer it in case of need, but only that this is not how the conceptual category in question is defined. Readiness to help is a (likely) consequence of the relationship, not its basis.

4.3 *Znajomi* ('close acquaintances')

Ukłoniłsię znajomym z daleka, bez zbytniej uprzejmości. (1953, SJP)

'He bowed to his *znajomi* from afar, without excessive politeness.'

Wyszli razem, bo miał ją odprowadzić do parku, gdzie czekały na nią znajome. (1949, SJP)

'They left together, because he was to see her off to the park, where her *znajome* were waiting for her.'

Po paru godzinach spędzonych w tym miłym saloniku, gwarzyli już z sobą jak starzy znajomi. (1901, SJP)

'After a few hours spent in this pleasant drawing-room, they were chatting with one another like old *znajomi.*'

Wszystkich przyjaciół i znajomych swoich, bez względu na wiek i płeć, zaprosił do siebie na bankiet, chcąc się z nimi pożegnać. (1779, SJP).

'He invited all his friends [*przyjaciele*] and *znajomi*, regardless of their age and sex, to his house for a banquet, because he wanted to say good-bye to them.'

Znajomi (glossed by Polish-English dictionaries as "acquaintances" and derived from *znać* 'to know') are, literally, "known ones," that is, people whom one knows. But in fact, 'being known' is only one component of the meaning of this important word. As many "participant observers" of both cultures (Polish and Anglo) have noted, the relationship between "znajomi" would often be described in English by means of the word *friends*, and only a small proportion of Polish *znajomi* could be described in English as *acquaintances*. If the English word *friend* means, so to speak, less than the Polish *przyjaciel*, *acquaintance* means less than *znajomy*. To put it differently, the English *friend* covers most of the territory shared in Polish between *przyjaciel* and *znajomy*, and—from a Polish point of view—it seems to obscure an important conceptual distinction. Consequently, for many Polish immigrants to English-speaking countries, accustomed and attached to their own universe of social relations, the need to preserve the distinction between *przyjaciele* and *znajomi* leads to identifying *przyjaciele* with *friends* and *znajomi* with *acquaintances*. For example, Hoffman notes that while she herself, after a while, gave up trying to preserve the distinction between "friends" and "acquaintances" scrupulously, her parents "never divested themselves of the habit, and with an admirable resistance to linguistic looseness, continue to call most people they know my acquaintance—or, as they put it early on, mine acquaintance." But in fact, what Hoffman's parents show is not really "admirable resistance to linguistic looseness" but rather unconscious transfer of Polish conceptual categories into English: they say "acquaintances" when they mean *znajomi*.

One wonders in this connection whether Joseph Conrad's insistence on distinguishing a "friend" from a mere "acquaintance" (as in the quote below) is not similarly due to the influence of Polish: "You understand that I am not their friend. I am only a holiday acquaintance" (quoted in *Webster's third*).

Janine Wedel (1986), too, tends to identify *znajomi* with "acquaintances" when she writes:

> The most distant relationships are those of *znajomi* (acquaintances). *Znajomi* has a broad meaning; it can refer to people that one sees frequently, or to those one has just met. Neighbours often become close acquaintances, aided by their proximity and the long time period, often years, in which they have to build relationships and engage in exchange. Hence there are "close" and "distant" acquaintances, as well as long-term and short-term acquaintances. (107).

But this is not quite accurate. *Rodzina* can indeed be described as *bliska* or *najbliższa* ('close' or 'closest') and *daleka* or *dalsza* ('distant' or 'more distant'), but *znajomi* cannot be described as *dalecy* or *dalsi* (plural). They can, on the other hand, be described as *bliscy* or *dobrzy* ('close' or 'good'). The same applies to *przyjaciele*, who can be either *przyjaciele* tout court, or *bliscy przyjaciele* 'close *przyjaciele*', but not *dalecy przyjaciele* ('distant *przyjaciele*').[13] What these collocations suggest is that *znajomi*, unlike *acquaintances*, are seen as people whom one knows fairly well and with whom one has a bond which is far from negligible: not only *bliscy znajomi* and *dobrzy znajomi*, but any kind of *znajomi*. From this point of view, *znajomi* are more like English *friends* than like English *acquaintances*.

The very fact that one often speaks in Polish of *dobrzy znajomi* 'good *znajomi*', and *bliscy znajomi* 'close *znajomi*', highlights the difference between *znajomi* and *acquaintances* and the similarity between *znajomyi* and *friends*: in English, one can speak of "good friends" and "close friends" but not of "good acquaintances" or "close acquaintances."

Eva Hoffman's friend who doesn't quite qualify as a *przyjaciółka* could not be described as Eva's *znajoma* either. In Polish, Penny would be described as a *koleżanka*, and although one of one's *koleżanki* can become one's *przyjaciółka*, a *koleżanka* can never be described as a *znajoma*. Loosely speaking, the reason seems to be that the category of *znajomi* implies a certain reserve and voluntary distance, which are incompatible with the solidarity of *koleżanki*. It is also interesting to note that children can't have *znajomi* at all, although the categories of *przyjaciele/przyjaciółki* and *koledzy/koleżanki* are perfectly applicable to them. The word *znajomi* is parallel in this respect to the polite titles *Pan* and *Pani*, which also cannot be used for children. Normally, *przyjaciele* and *koledzy* would address each other with the "familiar" form *ty*, whereas *znajomi* would use the "unfamiliar" forms *Pan* and *Pani*. The correspondence between the forms of address and the lexical categorization of human relations is certainly striking. One could say that both forms of address and lexical categories of human relations suggest that Polish culture values gradation in and barriers to intimacy and closeness, as well as intimacy and closeness as such.

Consider, for example, the possibilities available for addressing a Professor Tadeusz Kowalski. When I address this person, my basic options include: *Tadziu*, *Tadek*, *Tadeusz*, *Panie Tadziu*, *Panie Tadku*, *Panie Tadeuszu*, *Panie Profesorze*. Each of these options implies a different kind of relationship and, roughly speaking, a different degree of "closeness," "intimacy," and "familiarity." For example, the combination of the diminutive form *Tadziu* with the polite title *Panie* in *Panie Tadziu* implies that I wish to convey something like affection for the addressee while also setting a certain barrier between us.

Given the value placed in Polish culture on "degrees" of familiarity, closeness, and intimacy, one can well understand why the Polish emigré poet and professor of Slavic literatures at Harvard University, Stanisław Barańczak, includes the following item on his "list of things American which E.E. [East European] will never be able to come to terms with": "being addressed on a first-name basis by strangers" (1990:11).

What I am suggesting, then, is that by defining many of their personal relationships in terms of *znajomi*, Poles are also setting and acknowledging certain barriers in these relationships. Relationships without social barriers (those with *przyjaciele* and *rodzina*) are also valued, of course, but so are those with deliberately set barriers (i.e. those with *znajomi*). This can be represented as follows:

(my) znajomi
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
(b)   I know these people well
(c)   I don't want to say: very well
(d)   I can say things of some kinds to these people
(e)   I don't want to say things of some other kinds to these people
(f)   when I say things to these people, I often feel something good
(g)   I think these people think the same about me
(h) I think like this about these people

In this formula, the "barriers" are represented in the components (c) and (e), whereas the closeness of the relationship is represented in (b) and (f). Component (b) reflects the fact that *znajomi* are people of one's own social circle, people with whom one maintains social relations, whereas (f) reflects the voluntary and the pleasurable character of these contacts.

It could be argued that the English concept of 'acquaintance', too, sets barriers in social relations. But first, as mentioned earlier, this concept is quite marginal in English, whereas in Polish the concept of *znajomi* has considerable significance in people's lives; and second, the concept of 'acquaintance' does not apply to fairly close relationships at all, whereas that of *znajomi* does. *Znajomi*, in contrast to *acquaintances*, are seen as people whom one knows well and contact with whom is perceived as pleasurable or satisfying.

Unlike *przyjaciel*, the concept of *znajomy* does not imply any willingness to confide, to share one's thoughts and feelings with the other person; it does, however, imply a willingness to talk—though not without some barriers on what one is willing to say. Unlike *przyjaciel*, *znajomy* doesn't necessarily imply affection ('when I think about this person, I feel something good'); it does imply, however, "good feelings" related to social (mainly conversational) contact ('when I say things to these people, I often feel something good'). The fact that one could never use the word *znajomi* as a form of address, and hardly as a form of introduction, supports the absence of a 'when I think of these people I feel something good' component in its meaning:

*Znajomy! *Znajomi!
*Przyjaciele i znajomi!

'Friends and acquaintances!'

?*To jest mój znajomy X.

'This is my *znajomy* X.'

The explication of *znajomi*—like that of *koledzy*, and unlike that of *przyjaciel*—has deliberately been phrased in the plural. Although *znajomi* does not refer to any set of people within an institutional framework, as *koledzy* does, it does refer to a circle of people whom one knows and maintains contacts with, and only secondarily to individual members of this circle.

This primacy of the plural is confirmed, to some extent, by statistical data. In the case of *przyjaciel* (and *przyjaciółka*), the frequencies of the singular and the plural (as recorded by Kurcz et al. 1990) are similar (78 vs. 72), in the case of *znajomi* the plural is much more common (14 vs. 32). (As mentioned earlier, such statistical data are not conclusive, but they are nonetheless suggestive.)

Wedel's observation that, for example, "Family, very close friends, colleagues and 'good acquaintances' are the four types of individuals Poles invite into their homes for dinner or parties" (1986:112) acknowledges the importance of *znajomi* as people with whom Poles deliberately maintain contact.

Wedel repeatedly stresses the value of *znajomi* in "People's Poland" as people who could call on each other in times of need, and the derived word *znajomości* referring to networks of mutual help (often stretching the law for private purposes) supports this. At the same time, it is important to recognize that mutual help (whether within the law or not) is not part of the meaning of the word *znajomi* (as it is not part of the meaning of *przyjaciele* or *koledzy*). People like to do something, from time to time, with their *znajomi*—to meet in a coffeehouse, to talk, to visit, to swap political jokes (under communism), to go to the theater or cinema together, and so on—because such contacts and conversations satisfy their social needs and make them "feel something good," and not merely because they expect to get something out of it. The proposed explication reflects that, and it deliberately omits any reference to mutual help.

4.4 *Rodzina* ('family')

The word *rodzina* is outside the scope of this chapter, strictly speaking, but since it is, as Wedel (1986:103) says, one of the four basic categories used in Polish for categorizing human relations, it does merit a few brief comments.

Looking at the concept of 'rodzina' from an Anglo point of view, one is struck, first of all, by how much territory it covers, in comparison with the English *family*:

> In Poland "the family" may include extended family members such as aunts, uncles and cousins, or the term may refer to immediate family members—children, parents, sometimes grandparents, often people who share a household. People speak of "the closest family," which is defined as either of the above. They speak of "more distant family," those wider kin relations with whom they may or may not have frequent contact. Wedel (1986:99)

Wedel's point referring to the common collocations *najbliższa rodzina* 'the closest family' and *dalsza rodzina* 'more distant family' is very important because it

highlights the difference between the concepts 'rodzina' and 'family'. Without a modifier, *rodzina* covers a territory extending far beyond the so-called nuclear family. A distinction between "the closest *rodzina*" and "the more distant *rodzina*" can be made, but "the more distant *rodzina*" is not seen as an "extension" of the same basic core; rather, the whole "extended family" is seen as simply *rodzina*. The expression *najbliższa rodzina* ('the closest *rodzina*') cuts off, so to speak, some real members of the *rodzina*, not some "extensions" to the *rodzina*. This could be compared with the English distinction between *close friends* and *friends*: *close friends* constitute only a subset of *friends*, and similarly, *najbliższa rodzina* constitutes only a subset of *rodzina*. In English, on the other hand, *immediate family* is not seen as a subset of *family*; rather, this phrase seems to emphasize that what is meant is "family" in the strict sense and not "extended family."

I would add that in English, the phrases *extended family* and *nuclear family* belong to the technical language of sociology, not to everyday speech, and that even the phrase *immediate family* sounds like a sociological comment rather than like a "normal" everyday way of speaking (for example, it does not belong to the same register as *close friends*). Normally, one says simply *family*, and while this may include brothers and sisters, or grandparents, it would normally not include aunts, uncles, or cousins.

In Polish, too, one normally says *rodzina*, without modifiers, but this would normally include aunts, uncles, and cousins. The expression *najbliższa rodzina* does not sound like a sociological comment but has a stylistic status comparable to that of *close friends* in English; and the adjective *najbliższa*, like *close* in English, serves here to narrow down the basic category to a subset of this category. To illustrate the meaning of *rodzina* (which she glosses as "family") in Polish, Wedel (1986) cites the following dialogue between herself and one of her Polish friends, Barbara:

> Barbara explained how she plans to go about obtaining a refrigerator when she eventually moves into her brother's apartment.
> "But on whom can you most depend to help you get the refrigerator?" I inquired.
> "Well, on my family. Always."
> "Family, meaning your parents and brother?"
> "No, no," she adamantly replied. "Family means the closest family. Brothers and sisters of my mother, their husbands, their families, the family on my father's side. We can really count on each other." (99)

Wedel comments: "Barbara depends not only on her parents and brother and his in-laws but also on her entire extended family unit." What is worth adding is that Barbara calls this "entire extended family unit" *rodzina* and, when queried, *najbliższa rodzina*.

Thus, what would count for Barbara as *dalsza rodzina* 'more distant *rodzina*' would in English correspond not to *extended family* but to *relatives*. This shows that in Polish, *rodzina* not only covers "immediate family" and "extended family" but extends even further than that, into the territory covered in English by *relatives* (although the word *relatives* as such has a counterpart in the Polish word *krewni*).

But what matters is not only a term's range of use but also its focus (cf. Berlin & Kay 1969), and for *rodzina* and *family* these are different, too. *Family* without a modifier is normally taken to refer to the nuclear family, although it can be extended

further than that, whereas *rodzina* without a modifier is normally taken to refer to a group extending far beyond that.

The point is nicely illustrated by Wanda Chotomska's (1967) children's story about a lonely hedgehog who wants to have a *rodzina* and who dreams therefore of finding not only a *żona* (wife) but also a *stryjek* (uncle), a few *ciotki* (aunts), and a *dziadek* (grandfather). The story ends happily with the hero finding some cousins, getting married, and leading a happy life with his *rodzina*, playing Monopoly with his father-in-law and his uncle.

An additional difference between *rodzina* and *family* is that the former emphasizes one's roots (parents, grandparents, past generations), whereas the latter places a special emphasis on one's offspring. Thus, *family* can be used to refer specifically to a couple's children (e.g. "we want to have a family"), but *rodzina* can never be used like that. On the other hand, *rodzina* is often used in combination with the preposition *z* 'from' to describe a person's background. The phrase *z dobrej rodziny* 'from a good *rodzina*' is particularly common:

> One mother asked a series of questions as she tried to assess whether the boyfriend of her engineer daughter would make a suitable husband: "Is he educated? Is he from a good family? . . ." The mother's questions were illustrative of the categories often used to gauge social position.
>
> . . . Part of a person's moral status is coming from a good family. In every social milieu or stable community in which families have known each other for many generations, certain families are considered good and certain ones bad. It was said about a prominent Polish journalist, "How can it be that he came from such a 'good family' and became an alcoholic?"
>
> A good family may have a history of high moral standards, abilities and discipline for generations. As part of a cultural elite with a particular ethos, members of the traditional intelligentsia have a heritage of education, cultural competence and social service. (Wedel 1986:152–153)

The concept of 'rodzina' can be compared in this respect with that of 'ojczyzna' ('homeland'): they both link a person's personal identity with "where he or she comes from."

Schematically (and without trying to use only primitives), the difference between a comprehensive and "backward-looking" concept of *rodzina* and the much trimmer and "forward-looking" concept of *family* can be represented as follows:

(X's) rodzina
many people
these people are like one thing
because every one of these people is a mother, father, wife, husband, or child of another one of them
X is part of this thing
X's mother and father are part of this thing
other people are part of this thing

X's family
some people, not many people
these people are like one thing

because every one of these people is a mother, father, wife, husband, or child of
another one of them
X is part of this thing
X's children are part of this thing

4.5 Summary and conclusion

Apart from *rodzina* ('family' and 'extended family'), the Polish taxonomy of human
relations includes three basic categories (*przyjaciel, kolega,* and *znajomy*). None of
these categories has an equivalent in English, although *przyjaciel* is relatively close
to the older English concept 'friend$_1$' (different from the present-day concept
'friend$_2$'). *Znajomy*, which can be compared with the Russian *znakomyj* (and the
German *Bekannte*), implies a certain distance and a lack of intimacy, and it extends
over a whole range of relationships covered in English by the words *friends* and
acquaintances, excluding, however, "close friends." *Kolega*, which has a very broad
range of use (applying to schoolchildren and soldiers as well as to professional elites)
is a uniquely Polish concept which emphasizes both equality and status and which
appears to embody the traditional values of the so-called Polish "noble ethos."[14]

5. *Mate*—a key to Australian culture

If one word had to be nominated as a key word in traditional Australian culture, few
would hesitate to nominate the word *mate*. From the first half of the nineteenth century
to the present time, it has been widely felt that the word *mate* provides a key to the
Australian spirit, Australian national character, Australian ethos; and even those who
do not wish to subscribe to this view have to recognize that the word *mate* holds an
exceptionally important place in the Australian national mystique. If it is not a key to
the Australian culture, then it is a key to the Australian self-image. But there is a great
deal of evidence that it is in fact a key to both (cf. e.g. Bell 1973, Kapferer 1988, Ernst
1990).

    To start with some recent examples (from a volume of interviews with two young
Australian rugby league players, Daley & Clyde 1995):

> And I liked hanging out with my mates. We were the cool cats at school and at
> lunch-time we'd be left alone by the other kids to meet on the back oval to do our
> own thing, which was to play sport.

> I wasn't a big television viewer. I'd prefer to be outdoors with my mates doing
> whatever came naturally, such as swimming at the creek, playing footy and listening
> to my music at night, than imitate a couch potato.

> It has certainly been a huge roller-coaster ride, but I reckon I've been fortunate to
> come through it all with a bloke who is a true mate, solid and strong. . . . Apart from
> being considered one of the game's top players, Laurie Daley is also one of the most
> popular blokes to have laced on a pair of boots. The fans love him simply because,
> despite his success, he has never once put himself above them . . . he's the people's
> person and gives a lot of himself.
>   Lozza, you're a champion and I take my hat off to you.[15]

> No bones about it, a strong team spirit can help win games because a side whose players play for one another is a pretty tough unit to crack. And not only that, I find the will to win for your mates is also a pretty reliable pick-me-up when tiredness sets in late in a match and your thoughts stray.

> About the best tribute I can offer Brad Clyde is to say I think of him as a good mate . . . he is someone I like to have a mag and beer with, and I'm pretty sure that's how it will always be.

Several of the main themes of "mateship" (to be discussed in this chapter) are here: the ideas of spending a lot of time together, doing things together, drinking together—of equality, solidarity, mutual commitment and mutual support, of companionship and fellowship in good fortune and in bad fortune.

As has often been pointed out, the Australian ethos is a direct descendant of the "bush ethos" which developed in the outback in the lives of the early (white) Australian bushmen, many of them convicts and exconvicts. As Russel Ward (1966[1958]) put it, in Australia—as in America—"the frontier was a forcing ground for the growth of distinctive national habits and sentiments." Most importantly (from the present point of view), these distinctive "habits and sentiments" were clearly reflected in language and, for the most part, have remained entrenched in it to this day:

> In Australia, the frontier has not had so much lasting effect on the external forms of life, political, legal, institutional and so on, as it has had upon men's attitude to life and so, at one remove as it were, upon the way in which these institutions are made to work in practice. Most Australians no longer bake dampers or wear cabbage-tree hats, but their ethos, like the speech which clothes it, differs from that of their British congeners more than it did a hundred years ago. (223).

According to many historians and social commentators, in the second half of the nineteenth century the "bush ethos" if anything gained in significance in the life of the country as a whole—and with it did the concept of 'mateship':

> Unionism came to the Australian bushman as a religion. . . . It had in it that feeling of *mateship*, which he understood already, and which always characterized the action of one "white man" to another. Unionism extended the idea, so a man's character was gauged by whether he stood true to Union rules or "scabbed" it on his fellows. (Spence 1909, quoted in TAND; emphasis added)

In the second half of the twentieth century, the significance of the traditions of the Australian "bush ethos" in the life of the nation has no doubt declined, and with it has declined the importance of "mateship." Nonetheless, these traditions have not completely died out yet, and the continued use of the word *mate* provides evidence for their vitality. The fact that in current Australian speech the use of *mate* has in some ways expanded and that this traditionally male word can be increasingly heard in the speech of women, also gives witness to their tenacity. One example:

—Sarah, do you know Susan Parker?
—Susan? She's my best mate!
(heard in Canberra, January 1995)

In fact, as Kapferer rightly points out, "many women in Australia are now stressing a kind of mateship among themselves" (1988:158).

The continued appeal to this concept by politicians points in the same direction. For example: "In his summit launching speech, he [Mr. Hawke, then Australia's prime minister], said: 'Our problems call for the application of those qualities of innovation, initiative, independence, tolerance—and, need I say, mateship—the qualities which we like to think are distinctly Australian (1983, quoted in Wilkes 1985[1978]:268). Similarly, in a 1988 speech, John Howard, leader of the Federal Opposition (and now prime minister), referred to "certain timeless traditional qualities about Australian life that . . . ought to be preserved and complemented in a contemporary fashion," citing "mateship and the equal treatment of people" as "the best of these qualities" (cf. Ernst 1990:110).

In any case, by "Australian culture" I do not mean the trends prevailing in the last decade of the twentieth century but those which have emerged and prevailed—to a varying degree—over the last two centuries. Seen in this perspective, the importance of the concept of 'mate', and of the ideal of "mateship" based on it, can hardly be doubted, and it takes a good deal of determination and ideological parti pris to try nevertheless to deny it, as Donald Horne (1989:183) does in his ironic comments on the subject (to which I will return in section 5.5).

The idea that "mateship" may be a unique cultural form in the whole history of human sociability seems to strike Horne as laughable, but careful semantic analysis shows that this is precisely what it is. The characterization of "mateship" as "bonded (male) comradeship" is vague and superficial; and on this level of superficiality many parallels can indeed be pointed to (beginning with 'comrade', or with the Russian concept of 'tovarišč').

At a deeper level of analysis, however, it can be shown that the concept of 'mate' is different not only from 'comrade' or 'tovarišč', but also from the French concept of 'camarade', or the Russian concept of 'drug', or the Polish concept of 'kolega', and probably from any other concept embodied in a noun in any other language. What Horne fails to appreciate is that concepts of this kind are very complex and that each of them reflects one particular perspective on human relations due to special historical and cultural sets of circumstances.

"Mateship" is not just a "bonded male camaraderie" (whatever that might mean), but a unique cultural ideal, based on a uniquely Australian perspective on human relations. Even though *mateship* itself is not a common everyday word in Australia, *mate* IS such a word; and the meaning encoded in it reveals a unique combination of assumptions, expectations, attitudes, and values.[16]

Before trying to analyze the meaning of *mate* which underlies the concept of 'mateship', let me first adduce some quotes from *The Australian national dictionary*, illustrating the importance of this concept in Australian culture.

River banks were grassy—grassy in the bends,
Running through the land where mateship never ends.
(1913, H. Lawson)

But nevermore shall I forget, not though I live for ever,
The days when we in mateship met along the Moonie River.
(1915, T. Skeyhill, *Soldier-Songs from Anzac*)

So mateship became the lonely poet's watchword, and he made it the watchword of Australia.
(1931, Lawson & Brereton, H. Lawson.)

The one compensating aspect of life as then lived was the element of mateship.
(1935. J. P. McKinney).

And some more recent quotes:

Historians have come to accept fairly calmly the notion that the Australian national philosophy of 'mateship' emerged from what was perhaps the world's only homosexual social ordering of things. (1973, Max Harris; quoted in Wilkes 1978).

Mateship is an important aspect both of the conceptions Australian males have of themselves, and of conceptions Australians generally have of their 'culture' [and] of an 'Australian way of life'. It is part of the legendary history of the nation, common parlance in the press and most other popular media and, not infrequently, an object of sociological inquiry. (Ernst 1990:110).

If anything, it's the lack of mateship in the House that will get to him. (About a footballer, Paul Osborne, turned MP, *The Canberra Times* March 11, 1995).

5.1   Different senses of mate

The Australian national dictionary (TAND) distinguishes four different though interrelated senses of the (Australian) word *mate*. Of these four, the crucial one is sense number three, but to understand it fully, it is necessary also to consider the others.

TAND defines sense 1 as follows: "an equal partner in an enterprise. Also working mate." This sense of *mate* was associated with a special grammatical frame: "to go mates" (that is, as TAND puts it, "to work as an equal partner"). For example, TAND quotes an advertisement in the Sydney *Morning Herald*: "Wanted mate to go rabbiting." Other crucial quotes illustrating and commenting on this sense of *mate* include the following:

These men when they contract to do heavy work, as clearing, fencing, etc., almost always do it in parties of two, or more, being prompted to this in the first place by the hardness of the work, which a man cannot face alone, requiring always the assistance of 'neighbours', or 'mates', or 'partners', as they are severally called, even in the minute details. (1838)

Two generally travel together, who are called mates; they are partners, and divide all their earnings. (1845)

Two working mates occupy the same tent if working together. (1859)

A 'mate' was a 'mate'—share and share alike, no matter how bad might be the times. (1887)

I have alluded several times to 'partners', or 'mates', which was the more popular term. These partnerships were quite common amongst carriers and diggers in bygone

days. It was simply chums, owning and sharing everything in common, and without any agreement, written or otherwise. (1921)

As these quotes suggest, the essence of the original *mate* relationship (i.e. *mate*1) can be represented as follows:

*(my) mate*1
(a) everyone knows: many men think about some other men like this:
(b)   this person is someone like me
(c)   I have to do some things
(d)   I couldn't do them if another person didn't do them with me
(e)   I want to do them with this person
(f)   this person is often in the same place as I
(g)   this person does the same things as I
(h)   this person does these things with me
(i)   the same things happen to this person as to me
(j)   I think like this about this person
(k) I know: this person thinks the same about me

Component (b) refers to the equality of the "mates1," (f) to their spending a great deal of time together, (g) and (h) to their shared activities, and (i) to their shared experiences; (c) shows that the shared activities constituted work (and not, for example, a game); (d) refers to the heaviness of the work, which a man "couldn't face alone;" (e) indicates that the relationship was entered into freely, as a free partnership; (k) shows the symmetrical and reciprocal nature of this relationship; and (a) shows that this type of relationship was seen as common among men.

It should be added that although at the outset "*mate*-partner" referred typically to one person, at the times of gold rush it spread to teams of half a dozen or more. In keeping with the earlier traditions, the miners working in such cooperative groups were reluctant to work for wages and preferred to share their earnings, with one digger acting as a cook and tentkeeper, as was earlier done at out-stations (cf. Ward 1966[1958]:109). This use of the word *mate* in the context of group endeavors has no doubt facilitated the transition from the "*mate*-partner" sense of the word to the sense of *mate* focusing on a group and embracing companions in contexts other than those of partnership.

5.2 *Mate*2: a transitional stage between *mate*1 and *mate*3?

According to TAND, the second sense of *mate* was that of "an acquaintance; a person engaged in the same activity." This definition suggests that my *mate*2 is simply someone whom I know and who does the same thing or things as I do. But the examples adduced by TAND show that in fact much more was involved in that. Significantly, all these examples are in the plural. The relationship between "mates" in this second sense of the word is in some ways analogous to that in the first sense, but in the second sense there is no question of a partnership entered into freely; rather, the reference is to activities that groups of men have to do (for example, as soldiers, or as miners).

We told him our mates were gone, and that we had heard two shots fired. (1841)

Boasting, among his mates in the bush. (1849)

Kipper Tommy was ... acknowledged by his mates to be the crack driver of the district. (1879)

Covered with large green ants ... how they stang! and how my dusky mates laughed! (1911)

The boy had joined his mates in one of the little cemeteries on the Western front. (1919)

Seventeen of our mates were killed in the mining industry last year. (1934)

The old soldiers watch him, look around at their mates and don't listen. (1971)

The "mates" mentioned in the above sentences are not only people doing the same things (as suggested by TAND), but also people doing these things together (with one another, in the same place). Furthermore, there is clearly an assumption of equality or similar status ("these people are people like me"); and clearly, here, too, there is an expectation that the same things are likely to happen to all the "mates."

It is by no means clear that the second sense posited by TAND is indeed a separate meaning of the word *mate* and that one can distinguish it in a principled way from sense 3, from which the abstract word *mateship* is derived. For the time being, however, I will go along with the classification of meanings proposed by TAND and will discuss *mate₃* as if it were indeed a meaning separate from *mate₂*. Given the central position of this meaning (*mate₃*) in Australian English, I will call it simply *mate*, without a subscript (in contrast to the early nineteenth century *mate₁*, i.e. "*mate*-partner"), and I will return later to the question of whether this crucial meaning (TAND's *mate₃*) can be distinguished from that described by TAND as *mate₂*.

The intention behind TAND's hypothetical meaning *mate₂* is clear. What this category was intended to capture was sentences referring to one's "co-workers" without attitudinal components characteristic of references to people's "special mates," "good mates," "mates-friends." The intended category can be seen as intermediate between *mate₁* in the sense explicated in the preceding section (roughly, voluntarily chosen partners), and *mate₃* (to be discussed in the next section (roughly, companions seen as special "friends").

5.3 Mates and mateship

Moving now to the crucial sense of *mate* widely used in Australia for defining human relations and constituting the basis of "mateship" (TAND's *mate₃*), I will note that TAND defines this sense as "one with whom the bonds of close friendship are acknowledged, a 'sworn friend.'" This definition implies that a *mate* (in the relevant sense) is simply something like "close friend." In fact, the whole point about "mateship" is that it is not the same as "friendship," or even "close friendship," and that these two categories ("friendship" and "mateship") differ in culturally significant ways. As Kapferer says, "To reduce the idea of mateship to friendship or comradeship is not to comprehend its meaning fully" (1988:158–159).

To begin with some examples:

Where his mate was his sworn friend through good and evil report, in sickness and health, in poverty and plenty, where his horse was his comrade, and his dog his companion, the bushman lived the life he loved. (1891)

No matter what you do, your Australian mate will defend you—'A mate can do no wrong.' (1965)

'He's me mate. I gotta help 'im' he stated simply and incontrovertibly. . . . There was no answer to that, Gunner knew: the outcome of this incident had been predetermined by the peculiar chemistry of compatibility, by social mores and by the almost tribal ties of marriage, all pledged with countless beers. It was personal, traditional, and deeply masculine. (1977)

My "mate" in the crucial Australian sense of the word is someone whom I perceive to be "someone like me" (as in *mate*$_1$) but whom I also see, more specifically, through the prism of the collectivist concept 'people like me'. It is also—as in the original sense—someone who is often with me, who does the same things as I do, and who does these things with me.

But in the "*mate*-partner" sense of the word, being together was simply a consequence of doing something together—something that one needed to do (work) and that one couldn't do alone (heavy work). By contrast, in the "*mate*-friend" sense of the word, being together could be, and can be, mainly "hanging around together"— precisely because one wants to be together with that person.

Given the traditional (male) Australian ethos—anti-intellectual, anti-verbal, anti-overtly emotional—being together, for men, could not mean a great deal of "talking together," exchanging ideas, swapping confidences, articulating and revealing one's feelings. In this culture, being together for pleasure had to mean, primarily, "doing things together" and enjoying shared activities and shared experiences (that is, doing the same things together and feeling the same because of this).

There was mateship, sharing a billy of bitter-black tea, a smoke and a yarn. (1985, Dorothy Hewett; quoted in Wilkes 1985).

Even the verbal activity of "having a yarn" (in the Australian sense of the word *yarn*, see chapter 5) was more an instance of "doing something together" (and "feeling something because of this") than of verbal self-disclosure.

The emphasis on spending time together and doing things together rather than on talking, and in particular the abhorrence of any verbal intimacies is also well illustrated by the following statement from Hawkes's book: "We don't say it in so many words. When I see those Hollywood movies where they bleed their hearts, it actually makes me sick. It's just knowing that each other's around"[17] (1990:60)

It is interesting to note in this respect that one can talk of *good mates, best mates,* and *old mates,* but not of *close mates* (as one can talk of "close friends"). This shows again that what really matters in "mateship" is not something like "closeness" or "intimacy" (in the sense of intimate knowledge of the other person's inner life) but how much time one has spent with another person (sharing the same activities and the same conditions), and to what extent one can rely on them (a point to which I will return shortly). To quote an example from an Australian play:

ALF:	Wack and me are old mates. At the war together. (. . .)
MUM:	'E's never got married. 'E's never 'ad no one.
WACKA:	I've had youse.
ALF:	You said it, Wack, what d'y'mean 'e never had no one? We bin mates

ALF: for years. I've looked after him, haven't I, Wack? I seen 'im through. .
. . What I c'n work out, my old man seen 'im through the first show [i.e.
WWI], I looked after him all through the last lot. (Seymour 1962:32-33)

In the case of *mate*₁, the shared activities had to be work, and heavy work at that; in the case of *mate* ("*mate*₃"), the shared activities may be simply fun activities (drinking, smoking, occasionally "yarning").. Schematically (formula B is only a partial explication and will be expanded later):

A. (*mate*₁)
(a) I have to do some things
(b) I couldn't do them if another person didn't do them with me
(c) I want to do these things with this person
(d) because of this, this person is often in the same place as I
(e) this person does the same things as I
(f) this person does these things with me

B. (*mate*₃)
(a) this person is often in the same place as I
(b) this person does the same things as I
(c) this person does these things with me

Given the common practice of pleasurable "hanging around" with one's "mates" (for example, in a pub), one may be tempted to add two further (identical) components to formula B, namely (a') 'because I want this' and (c') 'because I want this'. Such additional components would stipulate that (apart from "mates-partners"), being together with one's mates and sharing activities with them is voluntary.

I don't think that this would be justified, however. In the "modern" (i.e. not "*mate*-partner") sense of the word, *mates* are often together, and do things together, either because they want to or not for this reason (but, for example, because they work together). The essential thing is that they are often together, and do things together, not that this being together, and doing things together, is voluntary.

In fact, it is one of the main differences between "mateship" and "friendship" that "friendship" does involve "voluntary association," whereas "mateship" may link people who are simply thrown together by circumstances. What matters for "mateship" is the attitude of those involved, not their voluntary choice of their associates. (For example, army cadets, who have not come together voluntarily but have been "thrown together by fate," may still be "mates," if their attitude to one another satisfies the expectations of "mateship," to be discussed below).

The sharing of "being somewhere" and "doing things," which applied to both *mate*₁ and the later *mate*, has continued to be linked with an exposure to the same experiences ('the same things can happen to this person as to me') and with a male perspective (two points to which I will return shortly).

As a first approximation, therefore, I would propose the following explication for the crucial Australian sense of *mate* (*mate3*):

X is my mate3
everyone knows: many men think about some other men like this:
    these people are people like me
    these people are often in the same place as I
    these people do the same things as I
    these people do these things with me
    the same things happen to these people as to me
    I know: these people think the same about me
I think like this about this person (X)

(This is not a complete explication; further components will be suggested shortly.)

Thus, the main shift in the semantics of *mate* (from the original *mate1* to the main *mate*) involved a transition from an emphasis on sharing work, out of necessity (usually, with one person), resulting in sharing company and sharing experiences, to an emphasis on sharing company, sharing activities, and sharing experiences—not necessarily because of sharing work and usually with a group of men.

The emphasis on equality ('someone/people like me') and on a specifically inter-male character of the relationship remained unchanged. Although in the past, the word *mate* (in the quasi-friend sense) was occasionally applied to women (TAND has included two such examples dated 1928 and 1930), there can be no doubt that throughout its history the idea of a 'mate' included a reference to a specifically inter-male style of relationship (continuing the cultural tradition of mates-partners going rabbitting or timber-sawing together).

Emphatic statements such as the following one may overstate this obligatory maleness of a "mate," but they capture correctly the necessarily "inter-male" proto-type, and style, of "mateship":

> "My mate" is always a man. A female may be my sheila, my bird, my charley, my good sort, my hot-drop, my judy or my wife, but she is never "my mate." (1960, Donald McLean, quoted in Wilkes 1985).

When one recalls that, as Baker pointed out, "For more than half a century Australia was almost entirely a masculine country" and that "as late as 1840 the proportion of males to females was two to one" (1970:121), it becomes clear that the masculine bias of the traditional Australian ethos, reflected in the concepts of 'mate' and 'mateship', had its roots in historical conditions and was related to the absence of women and to the fact that many men were dependent on other men for companionship and human contact. In fact, common references to Australian men "needing" mates suggest another dimension of continuity in the use of the word *mate*: just as it was once assumed that a man needed a "mate" (partner) to go rabbiting or timber-sawing, it was also assumed that a man needed a "mate" or "mates" to spend time with:

> A mate in Australia is simply that which a bloke must have around him. Mates do not necessarily want to know you. (1972, K. Dunstan, Knockers 52, quoted in TAND)

> The male who hasn't a male mate is a lonely man indeed, or a strange man, though he have a wife and family. (1913, H. Lawson, quoted in TAND)

And a recent quote:

> It is necessary to have good mates. (Hawkes 1990:52)

The supreme value of a man's *mate* was clearly linked with this notion, rooted in Australia's history, that men were dependent on men.

> Stevie is more to me than a man is to a girl—yes, I know you'll grin at that, but you don't rightly know what men are to each other out here. He's my mate—we're mates, and good mates. (1917, B. Cable)

> You've been a good mate and a man can't say more than that. (1948, F. Clune).

What exactly being a "good mate" means is a point which will be addressed in the next section.

5.4 The attitudinal components of mate

As mentioned earlier, throughout its history (after *mate*₁, i.e. "mate-partner"), the word *mate* has implied the same interpersonal attitudes—attitudes which in the literature on "mateship" are usually referred to with words and phrases such as "loyalty," "solidarity," and "mutual support." These attitudes, often contrasted with the American ideal of "self-reliance," are generally linked with the harshness of the conditions confronting the first European settlers in Australia and the economic conditions, which made individual success unlikely. To quote first an American observer, George Renwick: "Emerging from their particular heritage are the Australians' fundamental beliefs that one has a responsibility for his or her neighbor and that loyalty to one's friends is not only appropriate, it is essential" (1980:16).

Contrasting these Australian cultural attitudes with the American ones, Renwick writes:

> Consistent with their interest in limiting the depths of friendships while increasing the number of friends, Americans are careful to minimize their commitments to others.
>
> . . .
>
>   Australians have traditionally expressed the priority they give to personal relationship in terms of "mateship." Through the loneliness, vast distances, and the difficulties of existence experienced by the first Australians, men and women learned to help and trust each other. Australians still respect and share a genuine spirit of mateship, a sense that "we're in this thing together." . . .
>
>   Australians therefore believe strongly that "a man's got to stick to his mate and see him through." An American is more conscious of sticking to his job and seeing his work through to completion. (17–18)

What Renwick doesn't address is the difference in the original conditions for Australian and American settlers, which must have contributed to these differing cultural attitudes. These differences between the conditions in America and in Australia were discussed, with particular clarity, by Ward (1966[1958]):

The plain fact is that the typical Australian frontiersman in the last century was a wage-worker who did not, usually, expect to become anything else. The loneliness and hardships of outback life, as on the American frontier, taught him the virtues of co-operation, but his economic interests, unlike those of the American frontiersman, reinforced this tendency towards a social, collectivist outlook. By loyal combination with his fellows he might win better conditions from his employer, but the possibility of becoming his own master by individual enterprise was usually but a remote dream. So far from being 'precipitated by the wilderness into a primitive organization based on the family', he was precipitated into an equally primitive organization of 'nomad tribesmen', if one may conceive of a tribe without women and children. Thus it came about that differing frontiers in the United States and Australia produced two different kinds of frontiersmen, with mental attitudes which were very similar in some respects but very different in others. (226–227)

Ward's comments are echoed by Bell (1973), among many others, who wrote (with reference to Turner 1968): "The Australian dream, according to Ian Turner, had no element of the American dream of rising from the log cabin to the White House. In Australia the individual could rise only with the collective" (5).

As Ward (among many others) pointed out, in Australian "mateship" the idea of solidarity with one's equals had not only an egalitarian but also an anti-authoritarian ring and combined "the strongly social sense of solidarity with the nomad tribe, and the equally strong, antisocial hostility to any control, or even patronage, from above" (Ward 1966[1958]:227). This somewhat "aggressive" dimension of "mateship" is well illustrated by Henry Lawson's often quoted quatrain from his poem "The Shearers":

They tramp in mateship side by side —
The Protestant and Roman —
They call no biped lord or sir,
And touch their hat to no man!

The "collectivist" ring of the word *mate* can be accounted for if we formulate the first component of its meaning in the plural:

these people are people like me

Of course the word *mate* can also be used in the singular, but—like the Polish *kolega* or the Russian *tovarišč*—it refers to a prototype that is plural and collective, as well as clearly defined in gender: to a group of men. The very common use of phrases such as "Barry and his mates" or "me and a few old mates of mine" in Australian English points in the same direction. In the formula proposed earlier I have represented this as follows:

everyone knows: many men think about some other men like this:
    "these people are people like me"

This formulation suggests that *mate* is exclusive as well as inclusive. By emphasizing the notion that "these people are people like me," the speaker is implicitly referring to some other people who are not like me. It has often been pointed out that this group identification excluded "Abos" and "sheilas" (i.e. Aborigines and women,

cf. e.g. Horne 1989:184) as well as various immigrant groups (cf. e.g. Medding 1973), but the original emphasis was no doubt above all on people who might consider themselves as being "above" people like me and superior to people like me (in particular, the authorities, the police, the British). The following early example quoted in OEDS is characteristic in this regard:

> When the diggers address a policeman in uniform they always call him 'Sir', but they always address a fellow in a blue shirt with a carbine as 'Mate'. 'Mate' is the ordinary popular form of allocution in these colonies. (1852)

Of course, as mentioned earlier, "mate" as a form of address is not the same thing as "mate" used in reference or predication, and non-mates are more likely to be addressed in this way than mates. The vocative "mate" indicates that the speaker wants to show that he wants to treat the addressee "like a mate," or pretends to do so, and there is no need to do so with someone who knows that he is a real "mate." Nonetheless, the very existence of the two alternative forms of address ("mate" and "sir") reflects the assumption that there are two different categories of people: those who can be (really or ostensibly) treated "like a mate" and those who cannot. There can be little doubt that this assumption had real consequences in social interaction. For example, Garvin notes this about the Australian miners of the period: "You wouldn't dare be caught removing a mate's shovel, yet you were regarded as a bit of a hero if you outwitted the 'Joes'—the local police (1988:38).

The solidarity with "the people like me," which is justly emphasized in the literature as an essential aspect of "mateship," was clearly based on the shared existential conditions, including (1) doing the same things together (as in the case of Polish *koledzy*), (2) having the same things happen to you (as in the case of the Russian *tovarišči*), (3) helping each other at all times, (4) relying on mutual support in trouble, and (5) identifying with one another in the case of misfortune. These last three components can be represented as follows:

> I want to do good things for these people when I can
> when something bad happens to one of these people,
>   it would be bad if I didn't do something good for this person
> I don't want bad things to happen to these people,
>   as I don't want bad things to happen to me

As pointed out by Ian Green (personal communication), "mates" like and actively seek to do things for each other all the time, and in particular to help each other with specific projects that they have got going (such as building a fence or overhauling an engine). But they also have a commitment to looking after each other and standing by each other in times of trouble. The components 'I want to do good things for these people' and 'if something bad happens to one of these people, it would be bad if I didn't do something good for this person' reflect those two aspects of mates' mutual support. To quote Garvin again: "When fire, flood, or any difficulty arose you needed a man to stand beside you—and you had to be prepared to stand with your mate when hardships hit him" (1988:38).

Although in modern times the emphasis on helping one's "mates" in adversity may seem less pronounced than in the olden times, it is definitely still there (to the extent to which the concept of 'mate' is still there).

But while the attitudinal components proposed so far account for one crucial aspect of *mate* and *mateship*, they do not seem to fully capture the "loyalty" dimension, which is also widely felt to be as essential to the concept of 'mate'. After all, people could believe in the necessity of helping one another in general, and when misfortune strikes in particular, without feeling the need to "stick to one another" when one of them does something wrong, or when one of them thinks that the others are doing something wrong. Yet, as Frank Hardy put it, "a mate can do no wrong" (quoted in TAND), and the idea of "dobbing a mate in" (cf. chapter 5) or of "betraying" one's fellow workers by acting as a "scab" (i.e. strike breaker) is completely unreconcilable with the notion of 'mateship'.

The assumption of equality, existential bonding, and mutual dependence in the face of hardship and danger lead to attitudes which are loosely referred to by means of words and expressions such as *solidarity, mutual support, loyalty,* and *sticking to one another through thick and thin;* but without more fine-grained analysis it is impossible to see what exactly these labels are meant to stand for and how the attitudes in question differ from those encoded in other ethno-sociological categories, such as *koledzy, tovarišči,* and *druz'ja.*

Linking the basic features of the Australian outback ethos with Australia's convict past, Ward noted also: "Take, for example, the strongly egalitarian sentiment of group solidarity and loyalty, which was perhaps the most marked of all convict traits. This was recognized as the prime distinguishing mark of outback workers fifty years before Lawson and others wrote so much about mateship" (1958:77).

Consider also the following conclusion reached by Ward on the basis of his analysis of Australian folk ballads: "The greatest good is to stand by one's mates in all circumstances, and the greatest evil is to desert them" (188). Clearly, this is not quite the same as the belief that one must help one's companions in misfortune—or rather, it is more than that. Yet the idea of "standing by" and "sticking with" is generally felt to be essential to the traditional Australian folk philosophy of "mateship." To account for this "loyalty" dimension of "mateship," I would propose for it the following additional components:

> I don't want to say bad things about one of these people to other people
> I don't want other people to say bad things about one of these people
> I don't want other people to do anything bad to one of these people

Needless to say, these components are not meant to define the whole meaning of the word *loyalty,* or to fully explicate the assumptions behind condemnatory terms such as *scab* or *dob in,* but only that aspect of the concept 'mate' which was related to them.

According to the mateship ethos, a man is supposed to "stick up" for his mates. While it is an accepted part of mateship to "rubbish" one's mates (i.e. to say bad things about them) to their faces, for fun, it would be felt to be disloyal to say bad things about them to outsiders (in particular, to "dob them in") or to listen willingly to outsiders saying bad things about them.

The assumption that one doesn't say bad things about one's mates to outsiders is closely related to the assumption that one doesn't want "other people" to do something bad to one's mates. In a way, both these assumptions are reflected in the traditional

Australian abhorrence of "dobbing a mate in," that is, saying something bad about one's mate to someone in authority (a boss, a policeman, even the mate's wife) and thus possibly causing trouble for the mate.

Stressing how deeply the concept of 'mateship' is embedded in the "Australian psyche," Hornadge (1980) quotes, with approval, the following definition offered by Thomas Dodd and quoted in the *Australian Worker* (1926):

> What is a mate nowadays? Somebody you can rely on—through thick, thin and middling; past hell and high-water. Like the mariner's compass he always points north to you. In any trouble, you know what he will do, without argument; because, since he is your mate, it is exactly what you would do yourself. Your mate is indeed yourself in another fellow's skin. (129)

This psychological identification and solidarity with one's "mates," implied by the very word *mate*, is reminiscent of those implied by the Russian word *tovarišči*. In the case of *tovarišči*, I have represented this psychological identification and solidarity in the form of the component 'I don't want bad things to happen to these people, as I don't want bad things to happen to me', and in a sense, this could be said to apply to *mates*, too. But in the case of *mates*, this "solidarity" has the added "loyalty" and "anti-authority" dimension, and this requires a different phrasing of the explication. I think that the additional components proposed here account adequately for this aspect of "mateship."

The attitudinal components of *mate* discussed here are reflected with particular clarity in the meaning of the expression *good mate*, used in an absolute sense, that is, not only as "Jack is a good mate of Bill" but also as "Jack is a good mate." For example:

> Old Sam, born and reared in the bush, a good mate and bushman. (1968, OEDS)

As this example illustrates, being a "good mate" could be seen, in traditional Australian culture, as a standard of human value in general. This is also illustrated by the following nineteenth-century example, with a different syntactic frame:

> At this time I was mates with a young fellow called Jim Smith, a good enough lad as a mate. (1880, OEDS)

Clearly, being a "good mate" in that general, absolute sense is a matter of attitude to one's equals, whose existence one shares, and this attitude must involve more than readiness to help in misfortune. All the examples available are consistent with the idea that it involves also "solidarity and loyalty" in the sense of not wanting bad things to be done by anyone to one's "mate" as one doesn't want them to be done to oneself.[18] The expression *great mates* has similar implications. For example:

> An obelisk in the Jewish section of the Melbourne General Cemetery records the names of those who fought for Australia in the 1914 War. Many of them trained in the Faraday Street School cadets. They assimilated the lessons of patriotism and were great mates. (1974, Sydney *Morning Herald*, OEDS)

Praising a person as a "mate" (and, therefore, a fine human being) can also be done by means of other, more ad hoc chosen adjectives, as in the following example:

Poor old Joe! Too much courage and too little brain. . . . A grand mate, though. (1953, quoted in Wilkes 1978)

The word *mateship*, used in reference to an ideal, as well as a reality, points in the same direction.

This brings us to the following explication:

(my) mate

(a) everyone knows: many men think about some other men like this:

(b)   these people are people like me

(c)   these people are often in the same place as I

(d)   these people do the same things as I

(e)   these people do these things with me

(f)   the same things happen to these people as to me

(g)   I want to do good things for these people

(h)   when something bad happens to one of these people, it will be bad if I don't
       do something good for this person

(i)   I don't want bad things to happen to these people as I don't want bad things
       to happen to me

(j)   I don't want to say bad things about one of these people to other people

(k)   I don't want other people to say bad things about one of these people

(l)   I don't want other people to do anything bad to one of these people

(m)   these people think the same about me

(n) when men think like this about other men, they feel something good

(o) I think like this about this person

Component (a) of this explication shows that *mate* refers to a common pattern of social relations, typically linking men with other men, (b) reflects the egalitarian and collectivist character of this relationship, (c) refers to the companionship, (d) and (e) to shared activities, and (f) to the shared existential conditions. Component (g) refers to the willingness to help one's mates at all times, (h) to the obligation to help them in times of trouble, and (i) to identification with them in the face of misfortune. Components (j), (k), and (l) jointly show the assumptions of "solidarity" and "loyalty" with regard to the outside world, especially to anybody in authority. Component (m) shows the assumption of reciprocity. Component (n), which refers to the emotional dimension of the "mateship" relation, is formulated in such a way that it could cover not only something like personal affection but also something like a more general satisfaction in having this kind of bond with other men. Finally, component (o) reflects the fact that *mate* can refer to an individual as well as to a group.

Component (c) of the proposed explication might be questioned on the grounds that sometimes the frequent companionship may be in the past rather than in the present, but this is usually signaled by means of the adjective *old* ("an old mate of mine"), and in any case, the general frame given in component (a) signals that the conditions which follow refer to the prototype which defines the TYPE of relationship rather than every particular instance.

Having arrived at this final explication of *mate*, we are in a better position to assess the TAND decision to posit two distinct meanings (apart from "*mate*-partner"), *mate$_2$*

and *mate₃*. To this end, let us consider again the following two sentences, adduced by the TAND under the hypothetical meaning *mate₂*:

> The boy had joined his mates in one of the little cemeteries on the Western front.

> Seventeen of our mates were killed in the mining industry last year.

Is there any reason to regard such uses of *mates* as different in meaning from those illustrating the hypothetical meaning *mate₃*, as in the following sentence:

> He's me mate. I gotta help 'im. (1977, Beilby)

The intention behind the TAND decision to separate the supposed meanings *mate₂* and *mate₃* is clear: *mate₃* is intended to apply to something like "personal friends," whereas *mate₂* (with all the examples in the plural) can refer to fellow-workers, fellow-sportsmen, or fellow-soldiers with whom one has been "thrown together" by life.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, however, I would argue that Australian culture makes no such distinction between "personal friends" and "impersonal mates" (in the sense of, for example, fellow-workers or fellow-soldiers). To draw such a distinction with respect to the word *mate* would mean to impose an alien perspective on Australian culture and Australian English. From the Australian cultural perspective, it is important that one's fellow-workers, or fellow-players, or fellow-soldiers are treated with the same commitment, solidarity, and loyalty with which good personal "mates" are treated.

Consider, for example, the following quote from an interview with the noted Australian footballer Paul Vautin, known as "Fatty":

> Old mates—blokes who've known each other for 10, 20, 30 years, who've played together, got drunk together, been best man at each other's weddings—have thrown down the gloves and they're going for each other's throats. It's shocking. (Jamrozik 1995:36)

The "mates" whom Fatty is talking about are his fellow players from the Australian Rugby League—that is, people who have been "thrown together" by the circumstances but who are also drinking companions, people who enjoy each other's company and who are at the same time expected to be deeply committed to one another on a personal level.

Of course, one can always draw a distinction between one's "mates" in general and one's special "mates," or one's "best mates," as one can draw a distinction between one's "friends" in general and one's "best friends." But the word *mate* as such is no more polysemous in this respect than the word *friend* is. The nominal category *mate* is inclusive, and this very inclusiveness is culturally revealing. The same sentence can refer to special personal "mates" and to "mates" or "mateship" in a broader sense, without any distinction being made between the two, as in the following example:

> Shearing to me is the mates I've made. . . . There's no greater mateship in any industry in Australia. (1984, *People Magazine* [Sydney], quoted in TAND)

In traditional Australian culture, "mateship" was expected to bind people not only with their "best mates" or their "great mates" but also with their fellow-miners, fellow-shearers, fellow-"diggers," fellow-soldiers, or fellow-footballers, and this expectation is one of this culture's most enduring and characteristic features.[19]

5.5 "Debunking" mateship?

Since the concept of 'mateship' has always been regarded as one of the main keys to Australian culture, it is not surprising that in their efforts to abolish the very notion of "Australian culture" many recent writers attack this concept first of all. I will illustrate this trend with two quotes, one from Donald Horne's *Ideas for a nation* (1989) and one from Elaine Thompson's *Fair enough* (1994). Horne's approach (mentioned earlier) is to dismiss the idea of mateship as something characteristically Australian:

> ... by the end of the [nineteenth] century it [the word *mate*] had developed a special cultural form, in the noun "mateship," which was seen by many as Australia's decisive contribution to civilisation. The creation of this meaning was folkish, but it was also given intellectual popularisation by some of the professional bush cultists. It was nothing more than the idea of bonded (male) comradeship, but it was seen as having special Australian characteristics, given to it by the smell of gum-leaves. In the 1890s the word was also appropriated by the growing trades union movement, thereby giving nineteenth-century working-class consciousness a certain local flavour, and in the Great War it was appropriated by the Diggers, giving the camaraderie of soldiers a special Australian warmth that led its devotees to believe that their mateship was unique in the whole history of human sociability. (183)

In contrast to Horne, Thompson does see the idea of mateship as peculiar to Australia, but as "racist, sexist, ethnocentric, conformist and oppressive." "Mateship" thus becomes a whip with which Thompson belabors Australia's history and culture as a whole (with Donald Horne, on the cover, applauding):

> While the positive role of mateship in helping to create a powerful union movement should not be underestimated, neither should its shortcomings be overlooked. Because mateship was exclusive, it was not egalitarian but racist, sexist, ethnocentric, conformist and oppressive. These criticisms are hardly new, but the unattractive aspects of mateship were deeply embedded and part of mateship's defining characteristics. And they have ramifications for the way Australians have been portrayed by social commentators. (35)

> Australia was egalitarian *because* it was xenophobic and sexist. (252)

> Having done its best to destroy the indigenous cultures, Australian society has struggled to develop a distinct cultural identity out of an environment dominated by conservative, conformist, Anglo-oriented values. (215)

I hope this chapter shows that both Horne and Thompson are substantially wrong in what they say about mateship—Horne in dismissing it as a commonplace idea, and Thompson in presenting racism and sexism as its defining characteristics.

To begin with Thompson's charges, there are some words in English, as in many other languages, which do indeed unequivocally express racism and sexism. The well-known Russian word *černožopye* ('the black-arsed ones'), used with reference to Central Asians (cf. Wimbush & Alekseev 1982), offers a clear example of the former, as do English words such as *rice-eyes, slit-eyes, slant-eyes* (cf. Dean 1985); and obviously ethnic prejudice is reflected in English (Australian) words such as *wog, dago,* and *greaso.* As for sexism, the highly elaborated segment of Russian called *mat* (literally 'motherese') provides a particularly striking illustration, as do—on a much smaller scale—English words such as *bitch, doll,* and others. But there is nothing inherently racist or sexist about the words *mate* and *mateship.*

To say this is not to dispute the existence of either sexism or racism in the Australian past, or to deny any links between the ethos of mateship on the one hand and sexist and racist attitudes on the other. But it is simply incorrect to call sexism and racism "defining characteristics" of mateship.

As we have seen, the concept of 'mateship' does include (among others) the components 'these people are people like me' and 'men often think about other men like this'. But the component 'these people are people like me' can be interpreted more inclusively or more exclusively. It is not inherently racist or sexist, and this is why with changing social attitudes the use of *mate* could be increasingly extended to embrace migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and from Asia. (It is also worth noting in this context the remarkable success of the Australian Freedom from Hunger's "A plate for a mate" project, which was run in Australian schools in 1991.)

As we have seen, the inherent semantics of *mate* does not preclude the possibility of extending the use of this word to women either, despite the male prototype inscribed into its meaning and perfectly understandable given the gender imbalance throughout much of Australia's history. (Thompson, incidentally, denies the existence of such an imbalance, on the grounds that there were many black women in the country—an argument which defies both logic and arithmetic.)

Horne asserts that there is nothing uniquely Australian in the idea of mateship. This misunderstanding may owe something to a tendency to assume that rough equivalents are exact synonyms. As we have seen, however, concepts such as 'mate', 'friend' and 'comrade' are very complex, and each such concept constitutes a unique configuration of several semantic components. Some of these components may occur in different languages, but the configuration as a whole is often unique. (For further discussion of Australian culture, see chapter 5.)

6. Conclusion

For a number of disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, it is important to understand how people categorize and conceptualize their relations with other people. In the abundant literature on the subject, however, human relations are often interpreted through the lens of one particular ethno-taxonomy, especially that embodied in the (modern) English language. This applies both to the more traditional works on "friendship" and to those within the new discipline of "interpersonal relations" (as, for example, in the "Sage series on close relationships"). The problem lies largely in the reification of English words such as *friend* and *friendship*

and their unreflective use as descriptive tools and theoretical constructs in talking about people and human relations in general.

For example, in discussing what he calls "human friendships," which he compares with social relationships among non-human primates, Serpell insists that "mutual liking" is an essential feature of "friendship" (1989:116). But why should "mutual liking" be more important to human relations than, for example, mutual support, solidarity, loyalty, or shared experiences? Isn't the emphasis on "mutual liking" derived, unconsciously, from the modern English concept of 'friend'?

Consider also the following statements by another author, Allan (1979):

. . . friendship is a personal relationship in that it is seen as involving individuals and not as members of groups or collectivities. (38)

A second characteristic of friend relationships is that they are defined as voluntary. They are seen as consequent on the free choice and selection of each friend by the other. (40)

An assumption entailed in the idea that friendship is voluntary in that it is a relationship based on enjoyment. A friend is someone with whom you enjoy spending time and sharing activities. (41)

It is . . . a relationship . . . that exists simply because it is found to be enjoyable. (43)

All these statements reflect a perspective suggested to the author by the English word *friend*, in its modern usage. For example, as we have seen, the Polish word *koledzy*, the Russian word *tovarišči*, and the Australian English word *mates* do not imply a "personal relationship, involving individuals as individuals, and not as members of groups"; yet the bond between *koledzy, tovarišči,* or *mates* can be as strong, or stronger, than that between "friends."

The same applies to the voluntary, free choice of one's "associates." Even though "friends" can be chosen voluntarily, *koledzy, tovarišči,* and *mates* are not "chosen," but this doesn't make these relationships any less important.

Finally, the idea that the most important human relationships outside the family are those based on "enjoyment" does not even apply to the traditional Anglo culture. For example, when Emerson wrote that "a friend is a person with whom I may be sincere" or that "better be a nettle in the side of your friend than his echo," he clearly didn't mean by "friend" an enjoyable companion. Nor does the key Russian term *drug* or the Polish term *przyjaciel* refer specifically to the idea of "enjoyable company." Clearly, the dimensions focused upon by Allan (1979) (and apparently supported by the comments of his respondents) are in fact those suggested by the modern English usage. They reflect the assumptions, expectations, and values of modern Anglo culture.

But the literature on human relations is also full of works which are not influenced by the meaning of English words such as *friend* and *friendship* and which are instead making distinctions unrelated to the normal usage—in English or in any other language. This is hardly preferable to analyses guided (if only unconsciously) by the English language.

Consider, for example, statements such as the following: "Deep friends love one another," and "the idea of deep friends not confiding in one another seems almost unthinkable" (Thomas 1987:217). What exactly are these statements about? The use of the English word *friend*? Presumably not, since *friend* implies neither love nor mutual confidences. The use of the expression *deep friends*? Presumably not that either, since in fact there is no such expression in English. (English speakers talk about "close friends," "old friends," "good friends," "great friends," or "best friends," but not "deep friends"). What are they about, then? If they are about human relations regardless of language and culture, then they seem to mean little more than that some people love one another and confide in one another—hardly an original observation.

Having made those initial statements about what he calls "deep friends," the author proceeds to make some terminological distinctions, singling out "friendships of pleasure," "friendship of convenience," and "companion friendship," and talks about these "kinds of friendship" created by his own arbitrary terminological decisions as if they were objective realities. For example, he states that "companion friendships are a manifestation of a choice on the part of the parties involved" (215).

But what is the point of making generalizations about categories that we have invented ourselves? The English language and Anglo culture do not distinguish between "friendships of pleasure," "friendship of convenience," and "companion friendship." On the other hand, the English language does embody the socio-cultural category of "friend," a category which deserves to be studied as a reflection of, and a key to, objectively existing Anglo culture.

Similarly, the fact that the Australian variety of English includes, additionally, a socio-cultural category of "mate" is an important empirical fact, providing evidence for specifically Australian patterns of social relations and specifically Australian cultural values. This evidence guides us toward some objective socio-cultural realities and allows us better to understand them. Such realities cannot be fully comprehended if sufficient attention is not being paid to language and, in particular, to key words such as *friend*, *mate*, *kolega*, *drug*, and *tovarišč*. To fully understand such words, however, we need to avoid reifying concepts supplied by our native language and to try to explore the relevant terms—including our own—from a universal, culture-independent perspective.

Appendix

SUMMARY OF THE FORMULAE

friend₁
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
(b)   I know this person very well
(c)   I think good things about this person
(d)   I want this person to know what I think
(e)   I want this person to know what I feel
(f)   I don't want many other people to know these things
(g)   I want to do good things for this person
(h)   I know this person thinks the same about me

(i)   when I think about this person, I feel something very good

(j) I think like this about this person

friend₂

(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:

(b)   I know this person well

(c)   I want to be with this person often

(d)   I want to do things with this person often

(e)   when I am with this person, I feel something good

(f)   I think this person thinks the same about me

(g) I think like this about this person

(my) drug

(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:

(b)   I know this person very well

(c)   I think very good things about this person

(d)   I want to often be with this person

(e)   I want to often talk [say things] to this person

(f)   I know: I can say anything to this person

(g)   nothing bad will happen because of this

(h)   I want this person to know what I think

(i)   I want this person to know why I think this

(j)   I want this person to know what I feel

(k)   I want to do good things for this person

(l)   when something bad happens to this person,
              I can't not do something good for this person

(m)   I know: this person thinks the same about me

(n) when people think like this about other people, they feel something very good

(o) I think like this about this person

(my) podruga

(a) everyone knows: many women think about some other women like this:

(b)   I know this person very well

(c)   I have known this person for a long time

(d)   I think something good about this person

(e)   this person is someone like me

(f)   I have often been with this person

(g)   often, when I did some things,
              this person did similar things

(h)   often, when some things happened to me,
              similar things happened to this person

(i)   often, when I felt some things,
              this person felt similar things

(j)   when I am with this person, I feel something good

(k)   I know: this person thinks the same about me

(l) I think like this about this person

(my) prijatel'

(a) everyone knows: many people think like this about some other people:

(b)   I know this person well

(c)   when I am with this person, I feel something good

(d)   when I do something with this person, I feel something good
(e)   I think this person thinks the same about me
(f) I think like this about this person

(my) *tovarišč₁*
(a) everyone knows: people think about some other people like this sometimes:
(b)   these people are people like me
(c)   these people are in the same place as I
(d)   the same things happen to these people as to me
(e)   I don't want bad things to happen to these people as I don't want bad
         things to happen to me
(f) when people think like this about other people, they feel something good
(g) many men think like this about some other men
(h) I think like this about this person

tovarišč₂
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
(b)   these people are people like me
(c)   there are many people like this
(d)   these people want the same things to happen
(e)   these people want good things to happen to very many people
(f)   these people want bad things to happen to some other people   because of
         this
(g)   these people want to do many things because of this
(h)   I think something very good about all these people
(i)   when I think about these people, I feel something good
(j) I think about this person like this

(my) rodnye
(a) I think about these people like this:
(b)   these people are like a part of me
(c)   I am like a part of these people
(d)   it cannot be otherwise
(e) when I think about these people, I feel something very good

(my) koledzy
(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:
(b)   these people are people like me
(c)   I know these people well
(d)   I do many things in one place
(e)   these people are often in the same place
(f)   these people do the same things as I
(g)   I think these people think the same about me
(h) when people think like this about other people, they feel something good
(i) I think like this about these people

(my) colleagues
(a) I think about these people like this:
(b)   these people are people like me
(c)   these people do things of the same kind as I do

(d)   not many other people do things of this kind

(e)   I think something good about these people

(f)   I think these people know a lot about some things

(g)   because of this, these people can do things of this kind

(h) I think these people think the same about me

(my) przyjaciel/przyjaciółka

(a) everyone knows: many people think about other people like this:

(b)   I know this person very well

(c)   I think good things about this person

(d)   often when I think something, I can't say it to other people

(e)   I can say it to this person

(f)   I want this person to know what I think

(g)   I want this person to know what I feel

(h)   I think this person thinks the same about me

(i) I think like this about this person

(j) I don't think like this about many other people

(k) when I think about this person, I feel something very good

(my) znajomi

(a) everyone knows: many people think about some other people like this:

(b)   I know these people well

(c)   I don't want to say: very well

(d)   I can say things of some kinds to these people

(e)   I don't want to say things of some other kinds to these people

(f)   when I say things to these people, I often feel something good

(g)   I think these people think the same about me

(h) I think like this about these people

(X's) rodzina

(a) many people

(b) these people are like one thing

(c) because every one of these people is a mother, father, wife, husband, or child of
    another one of them

(d) X is part of this thing

(e) X's mother and father are part of this thing

(f) other people are part of this thing

X's family

(a) some people, not many people

(b) these people are like one thing

(c) because every one of these people is a mother, father, wife, husband, or child of
    another one of them

(d) X is part of this thing

(e) X's children are part of this thing

(my) mate₁

(a) everyone knows: many men think about some other men like this:

(b)   this person is someone like me

(c)   I have to do some things

(d)   I couldn't do them if another person didn't do them with me

(e)   I want to do them with this person
(f)   this person is often in the same place as I
(g)   this person does the same things as I
(h)   this person does these things with me
(i)   the same things happen to this person as to me
(j) I think like this about this person
(k) I know: this person thinks the same about me

(my) mate
(a) everyone knows: many men think about some other men like this:
(b)   these people are people like me
(c)   these people are often in the same place as I
(d)   these people do the same things as I
(e)   these people do these things with me
(f)   the same things happen to these people as to me
(g)   I want to do good things for these people
(h)   when something bad happens to one of these people,
          it will be bad if I don't do something good for this person
(i)   I don't want bad things to happen to these people
          as I don't want bad things to happen to me
(j)   I don't want to say bad things about one of these people to other people
(k)   I don't want other people to say bad things about one of these people
(l)   I don't want other people to do anything bad to one of these people
(m)   these people think the same about me
(n) when men think like this about other men, they feel something good
(o) I think like this about this person

Lexicon as a Key to Ethno-Philosophy, History, and Politics

"Freedom" in Latin, English, Russian, and Polish

The world has never had a good definition of the word
liberty.

<div align="right">Abraham Lincoln</div>

1. 'Freedom'—a culture-specific concept

Most of the copious literature on the concept of 'freedom' has come from philosophers of various sorts. To the best of my knowledge, there is hardly any serious linguistic literature on the subject. Yet linguistic analysis of this concept could play a valuable role. In particular, what is lacking in the philosophical literature is an analysis of 'freedom' and related concepts undertaken from a cross-linguistic perspective—an analysis which would be able to reveal, in a rigorous and methodical way, the similarities and the differences between concepts related to 'freedom' which have been lexically encoded in different languages, and which are often assumed to be simply identical.[1]

Philosophers, political scientists, and students of law are usually aware of the untranslatability of more or less technical concepts such as 'bail', 'warrant', 'custody', 'solipsism', 'determinism', 'parliament', 'oath', and 'democracy'. There is, however,

much less awareness that nontechnical concepts such as those encapsulated in the English words *freedom*, *justice* and *truth* are also language-specific. An awareness is also lacking of the fact that words encode certain conceptualizations rather than any objective "pictures" of reality, or that the same situation or state of affairs can be differently construed (cf. Langacker 1987, 1990) for the purposes of linguistic encoding.

In the philosophical literature on freedom, the authors usually express their own views about freedom (or try to elucidate the views of some other philosopher or writer; see e.g. Johnson 1980). But a certain "view" is encoded in the very meaning of a word such as *freedom*. This view encapsulated in the meaning of a word constitutes an important social fact. It reflects the dominant outlook of a society and, to some extent, perpetuates that outlook. It is important, therefore, that in writing about topics such as freedom all authors should be able to disentangle their own view from the view embodied in language-specific lexical items such as *freedom* (English), *libertas* (Latin), and *svoboda* (Russian), that they should try not to allow their native language to colour their perceptions of the philosophical issues under discussion, and that they should try to reach in their discussion a language-independent philosophical perspective.[2]

From a linguistic point of view, it is particularly important that language-specific concepts encoded in key words such as *freedom*, *libertas*, and *svoboda* be accurately decoded and translated into a culture-independent semantic metalanguage which would make the similarities and the differences between them explicit.

In what follows, I am going to discuss the concept encapsulated in the English word *freedom* and several related concepts: 'libertas' (Latin), 'liberty' (English), 'svoboda' and 'volja' (Russian), and 'wolność' (Polish). In each case, I will try to reduce complex and language-specific notions to simple and universal concepts such as 'want', 'do', 'can', 'other', 'people', and 'good'.

2. Libertas

As pointed out by Wirszubski and many others, the Latin *libertas* "primarily denotes the status of a 'liber', i.e. a person who is not a slave"; and it implies "the negation of the limitations imposed by slavery" (1950:1). As a first approximation, then, the concept encoded in *libertas* can be explicated along the lines suggested by Cicero (Paradoxa Stoicorum; quoted in Lewis and Short 1962):

quid est enim libertas? potestas vivendi ut velis

'because what is *libertas*? it is the ability to
     live as you want to'

Obviously, nobody can live entirely "as they want," or do all the things that they want to do, because of the manifold limitations on human life. To be able to live as one wants to means to be in control of one's own life—as a *liber* was, and as a slave was not. But this "ability to live as you want" was not understood as any "freedom from restraints" or "the unqualified power to do whatever one likes" (Wirszubski 1950:7). It was seen as consistent with restraint, and it was often contrasted by Roman

authors with *licentia*, the first being presented as moderate and restrained, the latter as immoderate and unconstrained. Two examples (from Wirszubski 1950:6):

> Illa vetus (Graecia) ... hoc una malo concidit, libertate immoderata ac licentia contionum. (Cicero, Pro Flacco, 16)

> 'That old Greece ... collapsed through that one weakness: an immoderate *libertas* or *licentia* of public gatherings.'

> Licentia plebis sine modo libertatem exercensis. (Livy, XXIII, 2, 1)

> 'The license of the common people, exercising their *libertas* without any restraint.'

In fact, the same Cicero who in one context defined *libertas* as *potestas vivere ut velis* ('being able to live as you want') in another stated that *libertas* consists in laws (*libertas in legibus consistit;* De Legibus, quoted in Wirszubski 1950:87).

Consider also the following sentence (from one of Cicero's letters, quoted in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*):

> ... sibi libertatem censent Graeci datam, ut Graeci inter se disceptent suis legibus. (Cicero, Epistulae ad Atticum)

> '... the *libertas* given to the Greeks, to decide things among themselves by their own laws.'

There is no question here of there being no restrictions on the Greeks' actions; what they want is to govern themselves. Interestingly, *libertas* of this kind can be GIVEN to them (as it could be given to a slave), so that they could become—within the bounds of what is possible—their own masters. The concept of 'libertas' doesn't imply a total absence of constraints on what a person can do, but only the ability to shape one's life, as far as possible, according to one's own wishes (that is, to be ruled by oneself rather than by somebody else).

The idea reflected in the Latin concept of 'libertas' appears therefore to be close to what Berlin (1969) calls (using the words *freedom* and *liberty* interchangeably) "the notion of positive freedom": "The 'positive' sense of the word 'liberty' derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's, acts of will" (131).

Charles Taylor (1982) makes the same point: "Doctrines of positive freedom are concerned with a view of freedom which involves essentially the exercising of control over one's life. On this view, one is free only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life. The concept of freedom here is an exercise-concept" (213). If one doesn't live as one wants to it is because one lives as a slave—a slave of somebody else or, metaphorically speaking, a slave of circumstances. To have *libertas* means, essentially, not to be a slave to anybody or anything (cf. Johnson 1980):

> Quae sit libertas? Nulli rei servire, nulli necessitati, nullis casibus, fortunam in aecquum deducere. (Seneca, Epistulae ad Lucilium; quoted in Stevenson 1958:723)

> 'What is freedom? It means not being a slave to any circumstance, to any constraint, to any chance; it means compelling Fortune to enter the lists on equal terms.' [Stevenson's translation].

In accordance with this discussion and illustrations, we could try to explicate the concept of 'libertas' as follows:

> *libertas* (e.g., *X habet libertatem* 'X has freedom')
> (a) someone (X) can think something like this:
> (b)   when I do something I do it because I want to do it
> (c)   not because someone else says to me:
>   "you have to do it because I want you to do it"
> (d) this is good for X

Components (b) and (c) show, roughly speaking, that one is one's own master and not a person under someone else's control, like a slave; and component (d) is needed to account for the positive connotations of the word, clear from nearly all the quotes adduced in large Latin dictionaries, such as, for example, Lewis and Short (1962). The presence of such positive connotations is also clear from common collocations such as *libertatem dare* 'to give freedom', *libertatem promittere* 'to promise freedom', *se in libertatem vindicare* 'to liberate oneself', and *favor libertatis* 'the gift of freedom'.

Taylor's idea of an "exercise-concept" applies to *libertas* in so far as this word could clearly be used to refer to actual behavior rather than to mere possibilities. To illustrate (examples from *Oxford Latin dictionary* 1968–1982):

> summa libertas in oratione, multae facetiae (Cicero, Brutus)

> 'extreme *libertas* in speech, many jokes'

> nimia libertas in adulescentia (Cicero, pro Caelio)

> 'excessive *libertas* in adolescence'

> omnium rerum impunitam libertatem tenere (Cicero, De oratore)

> 'to maintain *libertas* in all things, with impunity'

> tanta libertate verborum (Trebon, Epistulae ad Familiares)

> 'with such *libertas* of words (i.e. with such frankness, outspokenness)'

It might be suggested that *libertas* has more than one meaning and that the sentences adduced above do not exemplify the same meaning as Cicero's definition quoted at the outset. But even if one assumes that this is true, one will have to admit that the hypothetical second meaning is closely related to the first one:

> *(libertas₂)*
> (a) someone (X) can think something like this:
> (b)   when I do something I do it because I want to do it
> (c)   I don't have to think:
>   "I can't do something because someone doesn't want me to do it"

3. Freedom

At first sight, the concept encoded in the English word *freedom* may seem to be identical with that encoded in the Latin word *libertas*. On closer inspection, however, certain interesting differences emerge. In fact, in several of the sentences with *libertas* quoted here, *freedom* could not be used, or would alter the meaning. For example, the phrase *freedom of speech* could not be used in the sense of "frankness," "outspokenness," or "poetic license" (and *freedom of words* would not be used at all); nor would one speak in English of **freedom maintained with impunity*. Similarly, one could not **exercise freedom*, as one could *exercere* ('exercise') *libertatem* (Acc.), as in the quote from Livy. In English, one can *exercise power* or *exercise one's rights* but not *freedom*. Furthermore, one could not always translate *freedom* as *libertas*. In particular, phrases such as *freedom from persecution* or *freedom from tyranny* (to be discussed in more detail below) could not be rendered as **libertas ab insectatione* or **libertas a dominatione*, because *libertas* didn't take "negative" ("privative") complements of this kind.

The main difference between the two concepts relates to what might be called, loosely, a more "negative" orientation of *freedom*. This "negative" orientation can be interpreted in two different senses. First, it has to do with being able NOT TO DO things that one doesn't want to do; and second, with being able to do things that one wants to do WITHOUT INTERFERENCE from other people.

The first aspect can be represented as follows:

freedom =>
if I don't want to do something I don't have to do it

There is no evidence whatsoever that a component of this kind was included in the Latin concept 'libertas', or that it is, or ever has been, included in the English concept of 'liberty' (even though the meaning of this last word has changed, as we will discuss later).

The second "negative" aspect of *freedom* is highlighted in Isaiah Berlin's discussion of what he calls "the notion of 'negative' freedom." Unfortunately, as pointed out earlier, in Berlin's discussion the English words *freedom* and *liberty* are used interchangeably. This is confusing because these two words do not mean the same, and in fact what Berlin calls "the notion of 'negative' freedom" has become largely incorporated in the word *freedom*, whereas the word *liberty* in its earlier meaning was much closer to the Latin *libertas* and in its current meaning reflects a different concept, which is a product of the Anglo-Saxon culture. The polarization of the two concepts, 'freedom' and 'liberty', is in itself culturally revealing—a point which is lost if the two words are used interchangeably. Bearing this in mind, let us consider Berlin's explanation of "the notion of 'negative' freedom": "I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others. If I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree" (1969:122–123).

According to Berlin, the classical English political philosophers understood the notion of 'freedom' precisely in that sense. Berlin quotes in this connection Hobbes'

statement: "A free man is he that . . . is not hindered to do what he hath the will to do" (123), and he attributes the same conception to Bentham, Locke, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill:

> . . . whatever the principle in terms of which the area of non-interference is to be drawn, . . . liberty in this sense means liberty *from*; absence of interference beyond the shifting, but always recognizable, frontier. . . . 'All the errors which a man is likely to commit against advice and warning are far outweighed by the evil of allowing others to constrain him to what they deem is good' (Mill). The defense of liberty consists in the 'negative' goal of warding off interference. (126–127)

It is interesting to note Berlin's emphasis on the preposition *from* ("liberty *from*"). In fact, the English word *liberty* does not take the preposition *from*, and apparently never did, whereas the word *freedom* does.[3] This syntactic property of the word *freedom*, which distinguishes it from *libertas* as well as *liberty*, provides evidence for the view that the new conception of what '*libertas/liberty*' should consist in led to the emergence in Anglo culture of a new concept: that encapsulated in the word *freedom*, as it is used in modern English. I would explicate the meaning of this concept as follows:

freedom
(a) someone (X) can think something like this:
(b)   if I want to do something I can do it
(c)   no one else can say to me: "you can't do it because I don't want this"
(d)   if I don't want to do something I don't have to do it
(e)   no one else can say to me: "you have to do it because I want this"
(f)   this is good for X
(g) it is bad if someone cannot think this

By positing this component, I do not wish to defend the view that words such as *libertas* or *freedom* present the states of affairs to which they refer as morally good. Certainly, English phrases and expressions such as *free of tax* and *free of tourists* don't imply any moral judgment, in the way words such as *kind, courageous, honest*, and *just* do. It is a mistake, however, to conclude from this (as e.g. Sommerville 1962 does) that the word *free* is free of any evaluative component. *Free* doesn't imply an absolute value judgment ('I think this is good'), but it does imply a value judgment relative to the experiencer ('I think this is good for X'). The collocation *free from Z* implies that Z is seen as something bad for the person X and that it is good for X to be "free" from it.[4]

Charles Taylor (1982) contrasts the "positive" and "negative" conceptions of (what he calls) *freedom* in terms of control actually exercised versus options. In contrast to "doctrines of positive freedom," "negative theories can rely simply on an opportunity-concept, where being free is a matter of what we can do, of what it is open to us to do, whether or not we do anything to exercise these options" (213).

The explications of the concepts *libertas* and *freedom* proposed here incorporate Taylor's distinction as well. The following component of *libertas*:

> when I do something I do it because I want to do it

refers to control which is actually exercised, whereas the corresponding components of *freedom*:

(a) if I want to do something I can do it
(b) if I don't want to do something I don't have to do it

refer to options which are open to us. What Taylor calls "the opportunity-concept" is accounted for in the first component above: 'if I want to do something I can do it'; but it is both the components above ((a) and (b)) which jointly account for what Taylor refers to as "options."

It is interesting to note in this connection Locke's comment: "In this then consists freedom, in our being able to act, or not to act, as we shall choose, or will" ("An essay concerning human understanding," quoted in OED). In essence, Locke's idea of "freedom" differs from Cicero's idea of "libertas" ("What is *libertas?* It is the possibility to live as you want to") precisely in the way suggested by the explications proposed in this chapter: *libertas* focused on doing things that one wants to do, whereas *freedom* focuses on being able to do things that one wants to do and not to do things that one doesn't want to do. The notion of "non-interference," stressed by Berlin, is spelled out in the components referring to other people ('no one else can say to me: you can't do it because I don't want this', 'no one else can say to me: you have to do it because I want this').[5]

In support of the explication of *freedom* proposed here I would draw attention, above all, to the syntactic fact mentioned earlier: in English one can speak not only of "freedom OF" or "freedom TO" (something desirable, e.g. freedom of action, freedom of trade, freedom to emigrate, and so on) but also of "freedom FROM" (something undesirable). The combination of *freedom* with the preposition *from* has been possible in English for centuries, but in modern English the range of nouns which can occur in this phrase has changed. For example, OED cites the following sentences illustrating this pattern:

Though age from folly could not give me freedom,
It does from childishnesse. (Shakespeare, 1606)

Promising to the doers long life, health . . . , freedome from losses, and the like.
(Purchas, 1614)

The contemplation of our own freedom from the evils which we see represented.
(Burke, 1756)

But in contemporary English, one would not speak of **freedom from folly, childishness, losses*, or *evils*. Nor would one speak of **freedom from illness, death, stupidity, injustice*, or *neglect*. On the other hand, one may very well speak of *freedom from persecution, harassment, oppression, tyranny, coercion, external control*, or *interruption*, as in the following sentence:

This isolation, though it had, as Wittgenstein anticipated, 'great disadvantages,' was necessary if he were to enjoy the freedom from interruption he thought essential for his work. (Monk 1991:525)

The generalization appears to be this: *freedom from X* is felicitous if X refers to situations when other people do something to us, thus preventing us from doing what we want to do and what we think we have the right to do.

By a kind of rhetorical extension, *freedom from X* can also be used in situations when some condition prevents us from doing what we want to do and what we have the right to do, as in the case of *freedom from hunger* or *freedom from poverty*. Expressions of this kind constitute a kind of political statement: "Everyone has the right to do what they want to do and not to be prevented from it by X (hunger, poverty, etc.)." The implication is that hunger, poverty, and so on are social conditions IMPOSED on the sufferers by other people. *Freedom from illness* is not felicitous because it would imply that illness, too, is a social evil, imposed on some people by other people's actions or impardonable neglect. This point can be illustrated with Roosevelt's famous "four freedoms":

> In the future days . . . we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human
> freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression . . . The second is freedom
> of every person to worship God in his own way. . . . The third is freedom from want
> . . . The fourth is freedom from fear. (Quoted in OED)

Clearly, Roosevelt is speaking here of the social and political conditions which should be created in the "future world"; for example, his *freedom from fear* cannot be taken to refer to fear of death, or illness, it can only be interpreted as referring to fear of other people, born out of unjust social and political structures. As Locke (1690, quoted in OED) put it, "The modern spirit of liberty is the love of individual independence."

This "negative" semantics of *freedom* corresponds, then, to the ideal of "non-imposition," which is one of the major cultural themes in the Anglo world. It is not the ability to do whatever one wants that is a key Anglo ideal, because the supreme goal of individual rights is linked in this culture with a general recognition of other people's individual rights. It is "non-imposition" which is the key idea: "Maybe I can't do some things that I'd like to do, but at least no one else is going to prevent me from doing what I want and what I have the right to do." It is crucial to this conception that what applies to me applies also to everyone else: *freedom* is not just a privilege that some people may enjoy ('it is good for this person') but a universal right ('it is bad if someone can't think this'). The emergence of the concept of 'freedom' in the English language reflects the rise of this modern ideal; and the victory of *freedom* over *liberty* is a testimony to the shift in preoccupations and in values.

4. Liberty

The Statue of Liberty was once—and to many, still is—a symbol of America. Yet the ideal of "liberty" encoded in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English appears to have quickly declined in America, as the need to struggle for this ideal came to be perceived as less pressing.

In 1788, George Washington wrote, "Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth" (quoted in Stevenson 1958:1104). In general perception, by the end of the eighteenth century, the plant of liberty had not only taken root in America

but had grown so rapidly that Benjamin Franklin felt able to proclaim confidently, "The sun of liberty is set; you might light up the candle of industry and economy" (quoted in Stevenson 1958:1004).

But if the "sun of liberty" (in the old sense of the word) was set, the "sun of freedom" (in the modern sense of the word) was beginning to rise. The eighteenth-century *liberty* stood, rather like the Latin *libertas* (or the French *liberté*), for the opposite of slavery and oppression, and the rise of democracy in America has no doubt contributed to the decline of "liberty" as an ideal to be constantly struggled for (cf. Tocqueville 1953[1835–1840]). It seems reasonable to suppose that it has, consequently, contributed to the decline of the use of the word *liberty*, and to a narrowing of its meaning (to be discussed later). In support of the intuitive impression that the word *liberty* has declined in use, I will mention just two illustrative figures: in the corpus of Shakespeare's works, there are, roughly speaking, 100 occurrences of *liberty* per 1 million words, whereas in the modern COBUILD corpus, there are, roughly speaking, 100 occurrences of *liberty* per 10 million words, and if we discount the occurrences of *Liberty* with a capital L (as in "Liberty Road" or "Statue of Liberty"), it will be 100 occurrences of *liberty* per 20 million words.[6] The proportion of *liberty* to *Liberty* (100:122) is significant in itself, since names of places, landmarks, and institutions are often inherited from earlier times and often enshrine older concepts and ideals.

At the same time, however, the growth of individualism in both England and America and the spread of the philosophy of individual rights (documented by Berlin and others) have led, as we have seen, to the emergence and spread of a new concept of 'freedom', reflected in the English word *freedom* in the modern sense of the word, that is to say, a concept defined more in opposition to "interference" and "imposition" than to "slavery" or "oppression." Furthermore, the word *liberty* did not disappear from use altogether but underwent semantic change. If the word *freedom* focused, above all, on the rights of an individual to be "left alone" by other people, the word *liberty* became gradually specialized in "public rights," that is, in the rights of social groups, guaranteed by suitable political structures.

To appreciate this shift in the meaning of *liberty*, it is sufficient to ponder some older uses of this word, reflected, for example, in the following quotations:

So loving-jealous of his liberty (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, quoted in Stevenson 1958)

Man's liberty ends, and it ought to end, when that liberty becomes the curse of his neighbours. (Frederic William Ferrar, *Ideal of nations*, quoted in Stevenson 1958)

The liberty of the individual must be thus far limited; he must not make himself a nuisance to other people.
(J. S. Mill, *On liberty*, quoted in Stevenson 1958)

I enjoy large liberty to round this Globe of Earth. (Milton, 1671, quoted in OED)

The difference between the modern English concept of 'freedom' and the older concept of 'liberty' is well illustrated by the difference in meaning between the two expressions: *freedom of speech* and *liberty of the tongue*, as in the following example:

> John the Baptist, whom Herod had beheaded for the libertie of his tongue (John Knox, 1558, quoted in OED)

Freedom of speech emphasizes the fact that other people can't stop us from saying what we want to say. By contrast, *liberty of the tongue* emphasizes the fact that one says what one wants to say without taking other people's reactions into account. More precisely, *liberty* in that older sense can be explicated as follows:

liberty (older)
(a) someone (X) can think something like this:
(b)   if I want to do something I can do it
(c)   I don't have to think:
(d)   someone can say: "I don't want this"
(e)   I can't do it because of this

Other older examples of the use of *liberty* adduced by OED support an explication along these lines. Consider, for example, the following:

> You have my full liberty [*freedom] to publish them. (Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, 1749)

In this sentence, *liberty* suggests something similar to permission, but in fact it is entirely compatible with the explication proposed above. The speaker is conveying the following message:

> you can think something like this:
>   if I want to publish them, I can do it
>   I don't have to think:
>   someone can think: 'I don't want this'
>   I can't do it because of that

Needless to say, *freedom* cannot be used in a context of this kind. A few further examples:

> Youthful men, who give their eyes the liberty of gazing. (Shakespeare, *Comedy of errors*, 1590, quoted in OED)

Here, too, *permission* (*to*) could be used instead of *liberty(of)*, but the meaning would clearly not be the same: *liberty* implies here, as in other contexts, that one does what one wants to do, without feeling constrained by other people's possible disapproval.

> Bid him come in and wait for the liberty [*freedom] to talk. (Harriet Martineaux, 1833; quoted in OED)

> Some particular matters, which I am not at liberty to report (Richard Steele, *Tatler*, no. 109, 1709, quoted in OED)

In this last example, it is particularly clear that *not at liberty* refers to the fact that one feels bound by what someone else may say and wish.

Similarly, the expression *to take the liberty* clearly refers to something that the agent wants to do, although someone else may not like it, and has nothing to do with anything that the agent has to do, or doesn't have to do.

> I will . . . take the liberty to give them . . . my opinion. (William Cobbett, 1818, quoted in OED)

The expression *to take the liberty* is one of the very few contexts in which the older *liberty* has survived. Generally speaking, the history of the English language has confirmed in a spectacular way the justice of Benjamin Franklin's statement that "the sun of liberty is set." In contemporary English, outside a few set phrases, *liberty* is confined, by and large, to political discourse, and it is usually used with respect to peoples rather than persons. To illustrate:

> The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. (Dwight D. Eisenhower, Order to his troops, June 6, 1944, D-Day, quoted in Bloomsbury 1991)

> I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. (Barry Goldwater, 1964, quoted in Bloomsbury 1991)

> In totalitarian states there is no *liberty* of expression for writers and no *liberty* of choice for their readers. (Aldous Huxley, quoted in Merriam-Webster 1972)

Above all, the possessive use of *liberty* (as in *man's liberty*, or *his liberty)* sharply declined. This sharp decline in the use of possessive modifiers can be illustrated with the following figures: in Shakespeare's corpus, 23% of all the occurrences of *liberty* have a possessive modifier (23 out of 83), whereas in the COBUILD corpus, only 5% do (12 out of 222, including *Liberty*). Even if we excluded all the examples of *Liberty*, the figure would still be considerably less than in Shakespeare's corpus (12 out of 100; 3 of these 12 being instances of the technical phrase *liberty of the subject*). Possessive modifiers suggest an individual right or privilege. If *liberty* tends not to take modifiers any longer, this suggests that the idea enshrined in it has come to be seen as a kind of absolute.

Thus, *liberty* has survived (barely) as a word for an abstract ideal, on a par, it would seem, with other words for abstract ideals such as *justice* and *brotherhood*.[7] Nouns of this kind tend to take no complements or prepositional phrases, or at least to be highly limited in this respect. For example, one can say, "John's honesty is not in question," but hardly, "John's justice is not in question" (although "God's justice" is still possible). Names of abstract ideals of this kind are usually restricted to rhetorical generalizations, such as the following:

> Of a truth, men are mystically united: a mysterious bond of brotherhood makes all men one. (Thomas Carlyle, *Essays*, quoted in Stevenson 1958)

> The crest and crowning of all good,
> Life's final star, is Brotherhood. (Edwin Markham, *Brotherhood*, quoted in Stevenson 1958)

Words of this kind appear to refer to some unquestionable value judgment, along the lines of "people say this is good" or "everyone knows this is good" (not just good for some particular person, but simply good). *Liberty* in its present rhetorical usage belongs to this category of concepts. Tentatively, it can be explicated as follows:

> *liberty* (current)
> (a) everyone can think something like this:
> (b)   if I want to do something because I think it is good I can do it
> (c)   no one can say: "this person can't do it because I don't want this"
> (d) everyone thinks: this is good

Clearly, *liberty* in its present usage does not refer to a person's ability to act as they please with respect to anything whatsoever, no matter how trivial or selfish: the moral connotations of the word suggest that *liberty* has to do with everybody's inalienable right to do what they think is right and good ('if I want to do something because I think it is good I can do it'). As the seventeenth-century governor of Massachussets, John Winthrop, put it a long time before the word *liberty* narrowed its use to enshrine the ideal in question, "a liberty to do that only which is good, just, and honest" (quoted in Stevenson 1958).

5. The older meaning of *freedom*

It is important to point out that the meaning of the word *freedom* has changed, too, and that this word didn't always embody what Berlin calls the "negative conception of freedom." In older English, *freedom* appears to have meant something much closer to *liberty*, although the fact that the two words could be conjoined, as in the example below, seems to suggest that they never meant exactly the same:

> They died for the Libertie and Freedom of their Cittie.
> (Holden Sneton, 1606, quoted in OED)

To show the change which has taken place in the meaning of *freedom*, I will adduce several examples of the earlier usage (all from OED):

> 1. Alexander of Macedon . . . shall rule powerfully and with great freedom and absoluteness. (Bp. Hall, 1633)

In this sentence, *freedom* has nothing to do with any potential or actual interference from other people; rather, it refers to the fact that Alexander would do what he wanted to do without taking into account what other people might want him to do and without considering himself bound in any way by other people's wishes.

> 2. Hee would not permit Merchants and Sea-men to enjoy a freedom of that Sea . . . but at an extraordinairie rate. (Needham, 1652)

"To enjoy a freedom of that Sea" does not mean to be able to use it without interference from others, but to be able to use it and not to have to think that one cannot use it because someone who is in control of that sea may not want us to do so.

> 3. Having conferred on you the freedom of the library, he will not concern himself by observing how you use it. (Burton, 1862)

It might be suggested that in this last example *freedom* is used in the sense of "permission," but in fact this example does not differ significantly from the preceding one, where *freedom* is used IN COMBINATION with the word *permit* (and therefore cannot itself mean "permission"). Both examples (2 and 3) are compatible with the interpretation which says that someone can do what they want to do (with something) without having to worry that their action might be in conflict with the wishes of some person who is in control.

Essentially, the same applies to example 4, where the agent herself is under somebody else's control:

> 4. Let her alone to make the best use of those innocent Freedoms I allow her. (Otway, 1681)

In example 5, *freedom* is conjoined with *privilege*, which shows that here, too, what is involved is a "vertical" rather than a "horizontal" relation (that is, something closer to permission than to noninterference):

> 5. All Foreigners might freely come and reside in any Part of the Kingdom with the like Privileges and Freedoms as our selves. (W. Wood, 1719)

When the word *freedom* is applied to an animal, as in example 6, the implication usually is that the animal has no "master" (and not that it is not "imposed upon" or "interfered with"):

> 6. Neither age nor force
> Can quell the love of freedom in a horse. (Cooper, 1782)

The final two examples adduced below (7 and 8) may seem to be very different from the preceding ones, but in fact they can be explained in terms of the same semantic formula.

> 7. And laughed and joked with everyone . . . with the utmost freedom. (F. Darwin, 1887)

> 8. When officers do not eat or drink or take too many freedoms with the seamen. (J.S.C. Abbott, 1854)

These two examples appear to imply something like an absence of self-control, rather than the presence of control from somebody else. But it is not a matter of someone's being UNABLE to control themselves; rather, it is a matter of feeling that one doesn't HAVE to control oneself. Clearly, if one laughs and jokes "with the utmost freedom," there is no question of someone else's trying to stop one from doing what one wants to do but rather of one not having to think of what other people might say about our

behavior. Similarly, if an officer "takes freedoms with the seamen," there is no question of somebody else's trying or not trying to stop the officer from doing so, but rather of the officer not thinking of someone else's possible disapproval.

All these examples (1–8), therefore, different as they may seem, are compatible with the following semantic formula:

> *freedom* (older)
> someone (X) can think something like this:
>   if I want to do something, I can do it
>   I don't have to think: I can't do it

This formula differs from that assigned to the older meaning of *liberty* in the absence of the component 'someone can say: I don't want it'. In support of this distinction, I would adduce the fact that *freedom* (earlier: *fredom*) could also be used in the sense of "largesse," "generosity," "magnanimity." As C. S. Lewis points out, *The Franklin's Tale* "gives us a sort of competition in *fredom* (magnanimity, generosity) and hands over to the reader the problem 'which was the most free'" (1990:116). This use of *freedom* is compatible with the component (A) 'I don't have to think: I can't do it' but hardly with the more elaborate (B) 'I don't have to think: someone can say: I don't want it'.

C. S. Lewis points also to an older use of the adjective *free* (*freo*) which (in my view) is compatible with (A) but not with (B): "After her miraculous healing the blind woman in the old version of Bede, who had been laid to the shrine by her maids, went home 'freo on her own feet'" (1990:114). Having been cured and going home by herself, the woman could plausibly think (A): 'I don't have to think: I can't do it'; but there is no question here of other people's possible wishes (version B).

Of course, the meaning of the adjective *free* is one thing, and the meaning of the noun *freedom* another. I admit that some aspects of the explication proposed here are speculative, and I do not claim that it is necessarily entirely accurate. Be that as it may, the examples adduced make it quite clear that the meaning of *freedom* has changed, and that it has changed, roughly speaking, in the direction of "negative freedom" (in Berlin's sense): clearly, the older meaning of *freedom* makes no reference to things that one DOESN'T want to do, or to other people's potential or actual attempts to stop us from doing what we want to do.

6. Svoboda

The Russian concept of 'svoboda' might seem at first glance to correspond exactly to the English concept of 'freedom', especially in view of the fact that, unlike *libertas*, or *liberty*, the word *svoboda* can take sometimes a "negative" complement corresponding, roughly, to the English *from*-phrase. For example:

> Soveršenno novoe dlja nego čuvstvo svobody ot prošedšego oxvatyvalo ego. (L. Tolstoy, *Cossacks*, quoted in SRJ)

> 'He was overcome by a completely new feeling of liberation from the past.' (Literally 'A feeling of *svoboda* [*freedom] from the past, completely new for him, came over him.')

Nikto tak ne nuždaetsa v svobode ot prizrakov, kak prostec, i nič'e osvoboždenie ne
možet tak blagotvorno otozvat'sja na celom obščestve, kak osvoboždenie prosteca.
(Saltykov, quoted in SRJ)

'Nobody needs *svoboda* [*freedom] from phantoms as much as the simple, unedu-
cated man, and nobody's liberation can have a more positive influence on the whole
society than that of the simple, uneducated man.'

But despite these superficial similarities, *svoboda* doesn't mean the same as *freedom*,
and it embodies a different perspective on human life. The fact that even in the
sentences adduced above, where *svoboda* takes the preposition *ot* 'from', it could not
be rendered in English as *freedom* (as the asterisk on **freedom* indicates) provides
evidence for this.

Furthermore, if *svoboda* often cannot be translated as *freedom*, *freedom* often
cannot be translated as *svoboda*. For example, English expressions such as *freedom
from interruption*, *freedom from interference*, or *freedom from harassment* could
hardly be translated into Russian as **svoboda ot vmešatel'stva* or the like. To render
freedom from hunger or *freedom from poverty* as **svoboda ot goloda* or **svoboda ot
nuždy* is completely out of the question.

As a further example of a sentence where *svoboda* could hardly be rendered in
English as *freedom*, consider the following:

Svoboda poezii v tom, čtoby ne stesnjat' svoego darovanija proizvol'nymi pre-
tenzijami i pisat' o tom, k čemu ležit duša. (Černyševskij, quoted in SRJ)

'The *svoboda* [?freedom] of poetry consists in not restricting one's talent by arbitrary
pretensions and in writing what one's heart desires.'

In this sentence, *svoboda* refers to the absence of self-imposed restrictions and
pressures that limit the poet's spontaneity and ability to relax and to follow one's
inspiration and desires.

It is interesting to note in this connection that *svoboda* can also be used in a
somewhat different, though related, sense, as in the sentences below, where it suggests
something like ease and relaxation (quotes from SRJ):

Volodja otvečal emu (učitelju) s svobodoj i uverennost'ju, svojstvennoj tem, kto
xorošo znaet predmet. (L. Tolstoj)

'Volodja's answers to the teacher's questions were given with the ease [*freedom]
and confidence of one who knows the subject well.'

Aeroplan letel protiv vetra. No s kakoj svobodoj, vpervye porazivšej menja, on obošel
oblaka! (Kaverin)

'The aeroplane was flying against the wind. But with what startling ease [*freedom]
it wound its way around the clouds!'

V manerax ego, i bez togo razvjaznyx, stala projavljat'sja i ta obyknovennaja za
butylkoj svoboda, ot kotoroj vsegda nelovko stanovitsja trezvomu sobesedniku.
(Gončarov)

'His manners, already casual, began to display that characteristic drunken ease [*freedom] which is always so disconcerting for the sober interlocutor.'

In all these sentences, the word *svoboda* refers to the manner with which some actions are performed. It could be argued that in sentences of this kind *svoboda* is used with a second meaning, different from the meaning it has, for example, in phrases such as *bor'ba za svobodu* 'struggle for freedom'. I think, however, that even if one accepts that *svoboda* is polysemous, one should still recognize the clues which the second sense offers to the primary meaning. The crucial aspect of *svoboda* highlighted by the secondary use of this word is something like "ease" or "relaxation." It is very significant in this respect that all Russian dictionaries define *svoboda* partly with reference to the words *stesnjat'* or stesnenie, from *tesno* 'tight', as if *svoboda* was, essentially, a "loosening" of some sort of material or psychological straitjacket. In the examples adduced in dictionaries, too, the words *stesnjat'* ('to constrain, to hamper') and stesnenie (noun) very frequently co-occur with *svoboda*, as if the two concepts were closely related. A few examples:

Nikto ne stesnjal moej svobody. Ja delal, čto xotel, osobenno s tex por, kogda rasstalsja s poslednim moim guvernerom-francuzom. (Turgenev, quoted in SRJ)

'Nobody restricted [*stesnjal*] my freedom [*svoboda*]. I did whatever I wanted, especially after the departure of my last French tutor.'

Učast' vaša rešena: ja vas ne stesnjaju ... predostavljaju vam polnuju svobodu. (Pisemskij, quoted in SRJ)

'Your destiny has been decided: I'm not going to restrict you . . . I give you complete (full) freedom [*svoboda*].'

And one characteristic peasant-style example from Dal' (1955[1882])

Nikakoj svobodiški net, tesnjat vsem, otovsjudu.

'There is no *svoboda* [Dim.], they are squeezing [me, us] from all sides.'

One can't help thinking in this context of the much-discussed question of the import-ance of the traditional swaddling clothes in Russian culture. Some students of Russia have gone so far as to see in the centuries of almost universal use of swaddling clothes in Russian society a key to the understanding of the "Russian soul." For example, Erikson asks: "Is the Russian soul a swaddled soul?" (1963:388). To which he replies: "Some of the leading students of Russian character definitely think so" (cf. also Mead & Métraux 1953). Given these speculations, it is interesting to note that the Russian concept of *svoboda* fits remarkably well the image of a child unwrapped from its swaddling clothes and experiencing the pleasure of being able to move its limbs without any restrictions.

Unlike *libertas* or *freedom*, *svoboda* suggests a feeling of well-being, caused by the perceived absence of some pressure, some "squeezing," some tight, constraining bonds. It is interesting to note, in this context, the frequent collocation *dyšat 'svobodno*, 'to breathe freely'. In English, *to breathe freely* would suggest that some obstacle to breathing (for example, a chicken bone) has been removed ("completely removed");

this would cause a relief but not an exhilarating sense of well-being. But in Russian, *dyšat'svobodno* suggests the image of some oppressive "straitjacket" being loosened, so that one's chest can freely expand ("fully expand") causing just that: an exhilarating sense of well-being.

The terms *completely* and *fully* have been contrasted advisedly in the last two sentences. The point is that *svoboda* has different collocations and different connotations than *freedom*. In particular, *svoboda* frequently occurs in the collocation *polnaja svoboda*, 'full *svoboda*', whereas **full freedom* is not felicitous in English: one can say *complete freedom*, but hardly **full freedom*. This difference between "full" *svoboda* and "complete" *freedom* is very significant because of the "positive" connotations of *full* and the "negative" of *complete*. One can speak, for example, of *full responsibility, full length, full blood*, or *full daylight*, but not of **complete responsibility, length, blood*, or *daylight*, and one can speak of *complete (*full) absence of, complete (*full) lack of, complete (*full) inability to*, and so on. *Freedom* can be "complete" because *complete freedom* suggests "complete absence" of interference, imposition, and so on. But *svoboda* is construed differently, as the following comment by the brilliant nineteenth century lexicographer Vladimir Dal' (1955[1882]) illustrates:

> *Svoboda*—svoja volja, prostor, vozmožnost' dejstvovat' po-svoemu; otsutstvie stesnen'ja, nevoli, rabstva, podčinenija čužoj vole. *Svoboda*—ponjatie sravnitel' noe: ona možet otnositsja do prostora častnogo, ograničennogo, k izvestnomu delu otnosjaščemusja, ili k raznym stepenjam ètogo prostora, i nakonec k polnomu, neobuzdannomu proizvolu ili samovol'stvu.

> '*Svoboda*—one's own will, boundless space (expanse), the possibility to act as one wants to; an absence of restrictions [*stesnenie*], slavery, subordination to someone else's will. *Svoboda* is a relative concept; it can refer to some particular, limited space, relevant to a given situation, or to different degrees of space, or, finally, to full, unbridled, arbitrary self-will.'

The connotations of "boundless space," broad, expandable space in which one can FULLY stretch, are strikingly present in *svoboda* and absent from *freedom* (though of course not incompatible with it).

All these considerations bring us to the following explication:

svoboda
(a) someone (X) can think something like this:
(b)   if I want to do something, I can do it
(c)   when I do something, I don't have to think:
        I can't do it as I want to do it because some (other) people do/say something
(d) X feels something good because of this

Component (c) accounts for the experiencer's sense that there are no external constraints on his or her actions, that there is no oppressive "straitjacket"; and component (d) spells out the resulting sense of exhilarating well-being. It is interesting to compare component (c) of *svoboda* with the corresponding component of *libertas*: 'when I do something, I do it because I want to do it, not because someone says to me: you have

to do it because I want you to do it'. Clearly, the Latin concept focuses on not having a master (not being a slave), whereas the Russian one focuses on not sensing any external constraints. The corresponding English concept focuses, as we have seen, on options, and on the absence of interference from other people.

It might be suggested that the connotations of boundless space would be better accounted for if we assigned one additional "spatial" component to *svoboda*, along the lines of 'if I want to go somewhere I can do it'. I don't think, however, that this would be justified, given the fact that *svoboda* can also occur in phrases such as *svoboda pečati* ('freedom of the press') and *svoboda sovesti* ('freedom of conscience'). As we will see later, a "spatial" component will be assigned to another Russian word, *volja* (also translated into English as *freedom*), which cannot occur in such phrases. As for *svoboda*, the absence of any perceived constraints on one's actions (including movements) is, I think, sufficiently accounted for in component (c) of the explication: 'when I do something, I don't have to think: 'I can't do it as I want to do it (i.e. 'I can't do it the way I want to do it') because some people do/say something' and also in component (d) : 'X feels something good because of this'.

The cultural ideal enshrined in the Russian concept of 'svoboda' corresponds remarkably well to another well-known stereotype of the "Russian nature" (in addition to the "swaddled soul" stereotype), namely, the so-called *širokaja russkaja natura*, the 'broad Russian nature'. For example, Fedotov, in his article "Russkij čelovek" (The Russian character), describes the "broadness" (*širota*) of the Russian nature as the central feature of "Russianness" (1981:92).

The stereotype of a "broad Russian nature" suggests the image of a person who loathes restrictions, constraints, bonds of any kind, who feels the need to "spread out," to "overflow" any bounds like a flooding river. In fact, the elements, for example, wind, storm, or raging sea, provide another common image for *svoboda*, as in the following passages:

> Voda v gavani volnuetsja, šumit, budto serditsja na to, čto ee ogorodili krugom granitnymi kamnjami, lišiv svobody i prostora. (Novikov-Priboj, quoted in SRJ)

> 'The water in the port is breaking tumultuously and noisily as if it were angry at having been enclosed by granite stones and thus deprived of *svoboda* (?freedom) and space.'

In English, the notion of 'freedom' is not similarly linked with the elements, with boundless space, with "wild" behavior, with unconstrained breathing, with intoxicating freedom of movements. Rather, it is linked with individual rights, with private space, with being "left alone," with "privacy" and personal independence.

It is also interesting to note how many of the examples of *svoboda* adduced by large Russian dictionaries have to do with GIVING someone "full" *svoboda*, for example:

> [Dubrovskij] malo zanimalsja vospitaniem malen'kogo Saši, daval emu polnuju svobodu povesničat'. (Puškin, quoted in SRJ)

> 'Dubrovskij didn't do much to bring up little Saša, he gave him complete (literally "full") freedom to fool around as he liked.'

On skazal, čto ni na kom ne ženitsja, krome vas, . . . vam že on ostavil polnuju svobodu
xot' sejčas ot nego otkazat'sja. (Dostoevskij, quoted in SRJ).

'He said that he wouldn't marry anybody except you; and at the same time he left you
complete (literally "full") freedom to refuse him at any time, even right away.'

Examples of this kind suggest that *svoboda*, unlike *freedom*, can be seen as something
that is arbitrarily GIVEN by another person (rather like the swaddling clothes being
"arbitrarily" removed). This idea is not consistent with the notion of 'freedom', which
crucially involves complete independence from other people. (At the most, someone
may *let* you *have freedom*, that is, leave you alone, but hardly *give* you *freedom*, which
would imply extreme dependence.)

While the "swaddling clothes" image helps to clarify the concept of 'svoboda', I
would not join those who maintain that the traditional child-rearing practices should
be seen as an explanation of the emergence of this concept. Much more plausibly, the
semantic profile of *svoboda* can be linked with Russia's political history: the despotism
of the tsars, the absence of democratic structures or an effective legal system applying
equally to everyone, the importance of arbitrary power and the desirability of escape
from that power, and so on (cf. Wittfogel 1963, Fedotov 1981, Solov'ev 1966–1970.)

It is worth recalling here the emphasis that many students of Russian history place
on what they call "Russian antilegalism," "disparagement of law," "Russian legal
nihilism," or "a deeply rooted tradition of anti-legal prejudice" (Walicki 1987:1).
Often, comments of this kind are linked directly with remarks on the Russian "broad
nature" and the Russian fear and hatred of "being cramped." For example, Weidle
(quoted in Walicki 1987:10) wrote, "The largeness of soul on which a Russian prides
himself gives him a feeling of being cramped when he is compelled to depend on rule
of law."

Walicki quotes also (among many others) the remarks of the eminent nineteenth
century Russian thinker Petr Chaadaev, "who saw his country as . . . strangely
amorphous, lacking the discipline of forms, that is, the discipline of logic, of law, and
of social conventions" (1987:11–12). The imagery used in such remarks seems to
closely correspond to that linked with the notion of 'svoboda' (presence vs. absence
of "forms," "constraints," "restraint," "discipline," and so on).

More than a century after Chaadaev made these remarks, another distinguished
Russian writer, Andrej Amal'rik (author of the famous book *Will the Soviet Union
survive until 1984?*) commented in the same vein:

Russkomu narodu, v silu li ego istoričeskix tradicij ili ešče čego-libo, počti soveršenno
neponjatna ideja samoupravlenija, ravnogo dlja vsex zakona i ličnoj svobody—i
svjazannoj s ètim otvetstvennosti. . . . Samo slovo "svoboda" ponimaetsja bol'šin-
stvom naroda kak sinonim slova "besporjadok," kak vozmožnost' beznakazannogo
soveršenija kakix-to antiobščestvennyx i opasnyx postupkov. (1978:43)

'Whether because of its historical traditions or for some other reason, the idea of
self-government, of equality before the law and of personal freedom—and the
responsibility that goes with these—are almost completely incomprehensible to the
Russian people. . . . To the majority of the people the very word "freedom" is

synonymous with "disorder" or the opportunity to indulge with impunity in some kind
of anti-social or dangerous activity. (1970:31–32).

The published English translation of Amal'rik's work refers to "the very word
'freedom,'" but of course Amal'rik was talking about the Russian word *svoboda*, not
the English word *freedom*.

The emphasis on the possible "anti-social" and "dangerous" effects of *svoboda*
could conceivably indicate a new twist in the semantic history of this vital word, a
twist which may have arisen in the Soviet era. But the general emphasis on the
"anarchic" implications of this word is in keeping with the overall image of *svoboda*
reflected in Russian thought and Russian literature.[8]

The semantic formula which I have proposed for *svoboda* is consistent with the
(much-discussed) "anti-legal" bias of Russian culture. The component

> when I do something, I don't have to think:
>> I can't do it as I want to do it
>> because some (other) people do/say something

contrasts my own wishes with what "other people do or say." The opposition is not
between my own wishes and someone else's wishes which that someone may seek to
arbitrarily impose on me. Rather, it is an opposition between my wishes and the
possibly cramping effect of "what some (other) people do or say," and "what some
(other) people do or say" may include regulations of any kind, including legal norms.

The modern English concept of 'freedom' is not incompatible with restrictions
and constraints; on the contrary, it suggests a perspective from which constraints
imposed by the law can be seen as necessary to guarantee the inviolability of
everyone's personal space (cf. Berlin 1969:127; see also Walicki 1984:226).

The Latin *libertas*, too, was seen as compatible with restrictions, although for
different reasons. As Wirszubski put it, "*Libertas* is quite consistent with the dictates
of the *disciplina Romana*, *mos maiorum*, and *instituta patrum*, because it is conceived
of as a right and faculty, not of an isolated individual, but of the citizen in the organized
community of the Roman State" (1950:8). But the Russian concept of 'svoboda',
which evolved in a historical context very different from that of either England or
Rome, does imply an enjoyable absence of constraints of any kind. In this respect, it
is similar to another crucial Russian concept, 'volja', to which I will now turn.

7. Volja

As mentioned earlier, in addition to *svoboda*, Russian also has another word which
can often be translated into English as *freedom*, but which encodes yet another concept:
'volja' (a word which also translates as *will*). In the nineteenth century, this word was
used more broadly than now. For example, it was used in the slogan *zemlja i volja*
(also the name of an organization) 'land and freedom'. Its nineteenth-century use is
also illustrated in the words of the old song (quoted in SRJ):

> Za zemlju, za volju, za lučšuju dolju,
> Gotovy na smertnyj boj.

'For land, for freedom [*volja*], for a better life
We are ready to fight and to die.'

In contemporary Russian, however, the word *volja* would no longer be used in such contexts, having become restricted to life outside prison (and outside prison camps). The prison slang term *volnjaška*, common for example in Solzhenitsyn's novels, is clearly derived from that more narrow modern meaning of *volja*. *Volnjaški* (Pl.) are people who live in the world outside the prison system. The word reflected a prisoner's point of view (as the word *Gentile* reflects a Jew's point of view), and it conveyed a patronizing, superior attitude to the "free people," who were expected to be naive, untested, and weak, inferior to the tough and wise "zek."[9]

Fedotov (1981[1945]) describes the older concept of 'volja' in the following way:

> *Volja* is, above all, the possibility to live, or at least live for a while, just as one wants to, without feeling bound [*ne stesnjajas*'] by any social restrictions, not only chains. *Volja* is in conflict even with a person's equals, it is in conflict with the world. *Volja* triumphs either when one leaves the society for the limitless space of the steppe, or when one has power over society, when one can impose one's will over people, crushing any resistance. Personal *svoboda* requires respect for the *svoboda* of other people; but *volja* is always for oneself. It is not opposed to tyranny, because a tyrant is also a being endowed with *volja*. A brigand [*razbojnik*] represents the ideal of Muscovite *volja*, just as Ivan the Terrible represents the ideal of a tsar. Since *volja*, like anarchy, is impossible in a civilized society, the Russian ideal of *volja* finds its expression in a cult of the desert, of wild nature, of nomadic life, Gypsy life, wine, wild debauchery [*razgul*], passions oblivious of everything else [*somozabvenie strastej*], brigandry [*razbojničestvo*], rebellion, and tyranny. (183; my translation)

Fedotov, an emigré Russian writer (1886–1951) who only lived for a short time in the Soviet Union, regarded 'volja' as a concept more central to Russian culture than *svoboda*. It was *volja*, he suggested, that "the Russian people (*narod*) dreams and sings about, and that every Russian heart responds to. The word *svoboda* still feels somewhat like a translation of the French *liberté*. But nobody can deny the Russianness of *volja*. It is all the more essential to understand the difference between *volja* and *svoboda* as they sound to the Russian ear" (183; my translation).[10]

In contemporary Russian, however, *svoboda* is a much commoner and more central concept than *volja* (in the relevant sense). The frequencies of the two words cannot be compared directly because of the polysemy of *volja* (1. will, 2. freedom), but the relative frequencies of the adjectives *svobodnyj* and *vol'nyj* (198 versus 25, Zasorina 1977), speak for themselves. Moreover, the existence of the diminutive form *svobodiška* (as in the example from Dal's 1955[1882] dictionary quoted earlier) testifies to the salience of the concept of 'svoboda' in Russian folk culture, and not only in the culture of the Russian intelligentsia. Furthermore, if *svoboda* has ever sounded like a translation of the French *liberté*, it doesn't sound like that any more. In fact, Fedotov's own comments on *svoboda* (1981:183) make it clear that this word never corresponded exactly to *liberté*: "For a Muscovite, *svoboda* is a negative concept; it is a synonym of 'loosening of bonds' [*razpuščennost*'], impunity, lack of order and rigor of any kind [*bezobrazie*]" (my translation).

This description of *svoboda* tallies well with the analysis of the concept proposed in this chapter. But the French *liberté* does not have, and has never had, the connotations ascribed by Fedotov to *svoboda*. It has always been closer to the Latin *libertas* and to the English *liberty*; and it has never been a "negative concept" in either Fedotov's or Berlin's sense. Significantly, it has never been able to occur in "negative" collocations such as *freedom from* or *svoboda ot*. In fact, even the French adjective *libre* (whose range of use is wider than that of the noun *liberté*) differs in this respect from both the English adjective *free* and the Russian adjective *svobodnyj*. For example, *free to choose* translates into French as *libre de choisir*, *I'm leaving you free to do as you please* translates as *je vous laisse libre de faire comme bon vous semble*, but a *dust-free surface* is rendered as *une surface depoussierée* (literally 'a surface with the dust removed'), *area free of malaria* is rendered as *zone non touchée par la malaria* (literally 'an area not affected by malaria'), *we chose a spot free of tourists*, as *nous avons choisi un endroit sans touristes* (literally 'we have chosen a spot without tourists'), *free of tax* is rendered as *hors taxe* (literally 'outside tax'), and so on (examples from Collins-Robert 1983).[11]

Similarly, Russian phrases such as *mesta svobodnye ot lesa* 'places free from trees' or *nebo svobodnoe ot oblakov* 'a sky free of clouds' (both quoted in SRJ) could not be translated into French as **les lieux libres d'arbres* or **le ciel libre de nuages*.

Volja, as described by Fedotov, is of course very different from the Latin *libertas* and from the French *liberté*, but *volja*, too, represents a "positive" rather than a "negative" notion. Significantly, there has never been any **volja ot*, as there is *svoboda ot*, or *freedom from*. The etymological link between *volja* in the sense under discussion and *volja* 'will' was no doubt associated with a synchronic semantic link: the word implied that one could live "at will," do whatever one wanted to do. The nonstandard use of the word *volja* in the sense of "outdoors" points in the same direction: inside the house, one is restricted—not because one is forced to do things that one doesn't want to do but because one can't do certain things that one might want to do (move "freely" in different directions)—whereas outdoors, one can go wherever one wants to go.

Furthermore, *volja* (in the sense of *za zemlju, za volju* 'for land, for freedom') seems to have always referred to external circumstances, rather than to just any kind of '*liberté*', and especially, to the freedom to go wherever one wants to. The opposite which *volja* brings to mind (even in the older sense of the word) is not so much *rabstvo* 'slavery' as *tjurma* 'prison', as in Lermontov's poem (quoted in SSRLJ): "Davnym-davno zadumal ja vzgljanut' na dal'nye polja, . . . uznat' dlja voli il' tjurmy na etot svet rodilis' my," 'I decided a long time ago to take a look at distant fields, and to discover whether we have been born into this world for freedom [*volja*] or for prison'.

The hypothesis suggests itself almost irresistibly that this strong link of *volja* with the freedom to go away (from the place where one is forcibly held) has its roots in the centuries-long institution of serfdom, which deprived the Russian peasant of the right to move to another area to live. To quote one historian:

> In this fashion serfdom kept creeping in until it established itself. It appeared originally in the form of compulsory service to the nobility, who in turn presumably served the state. Soon the peasant found it increasingly difficult to depart unless he escaped, and

in such case he violated the law and was liable to prosecution. Yet many peasants at the risk of severe punishment would contemplate escape. Once the serf gained his freedom, he turned into half-peasant, half-warrior. He faced the danger of being raided along the frontiers by Tartars or Turks or he went himself to raid the raiders. Whatever hazards this kind of life involved, there was one precious remuneration—the escapee was free; he was bound neither to the land nor to landlord; he was restrained by no law except the voluntarily accepted rules of the primitive democratic social order in which he now found himself. (Mazour 1962:74)

This is what *volja* was all about: the dream to escape from a place where one is held against one's will, to go wherever one wants to, and to live by one's own will, without restrictions. The prominent place of *volja* in Russian folklore (mentioned by Fedotov) supports the suggestion that this word embodies, above all, a peasant's point of view.

One more quote, referring to a later period in Russia's history (Peter the Great's reign):

The constant outflow of thousands and thousands who found life too hard to be borne was from this time perpetually on the increase. Peasants not registered in the census were regarded as fugitives, and fugitives were treated as criminals. Peter forbade the peasant to leave his squire's estate without a written permission which, if he went farther than twenty miles outside the district in which he lived, had to be shown to a government authority and countersigned. Members of a peasant family had no right to travel except with the head of the family, who was alone entitled to a passport; persons without passports were regarded as fugitives. The most frequent of all subjects of legislation were the regulations for man-hunts to recover such fugitives. (Pares 1955:250)

These links between *volja* and the mass phenomenon of peasant fugitives, recurring throughout Russia's history, explains, I think, why it was so easy for *volja* to develop its recent meaning of 'life outside prison' (or an idealized version thereof). In fact, both the older and the recent meaning of *volja* can be assigned the "spatial" component mentioned earlier: 'if I want to go somewhere I can do it'. But in the older meaning of *volja* ($volja_1$) this spatial freedom was contrasted with the presence of a "master" (or a landlord), whereas in the twentieth-century meaning (as the word was used in the Soviet era) it was contrasted with the lives of "other people" held forcibly in prisons (or labor camps) by some anonymous higher power. This can be represented as follows:

volja$_1$

(a) someone (X) can think something like this:

(b)   if I want to do something, I can do it

(c)   if I want to go somewhere, I can go there

(d)   no one can say to me:

    "you can't do it because I don't want this"

    "you can't go there because I don't want this"

(e) this is good for X

volja₂

(a) someone (X) can think something like this:

(b)   I am not like some other people

(c)   if I want to do something, I can do it

(d)   if I want to go somewhere, I can go there

(e)   other people can't do it because someone doesn't want it

(f) this is good for X

The very fact that words such as *volja* (or *liberty* or *freedom*) change their meaning in the context of broader changes in culture and society supports the view that the conceptions embodied in them are "something relative, historically produced and historically changing; something relatively autonomous, able to exert influence on historical events as a relatively independent factor, but not something predetermining these events" (Walicki 1987:14). At the same time, this close link between the meaning of words (especially cultural key words) and the broader historical changes makes the study of meaning highly relevant to the study of history, for the meanings of words provide evidence for historical processes and interpretations.

8. Wolność

In the words of a thirteen-year old Polish-English bilingual, the Polish word *wolność* means something "much more important" than the English word *freedom* does. The perspicacity of this intuitive judgment can be appreciated when one considers that *wolność* translates *freedom* in moral and political contexts, such as *the struggle for freedom* or *freedom of conscience*, but cannot be used to translate *freedom* in relatively "trivial" contexts, such as *freedom of movement*, *freedom of access*, and *freedom from interruption*. The connotations of *wolność* are primarily national, but the word has also a moral dimension: it brings to mind, above all, national independence, with the implication that national independence is a kind of moral absolute (always threatened, and always to be struggled for, at the cost of any personal sacrifices). It is interesting to note, in this connection, the first definition of *wolność* in the monumental *Dictionary of the Polish language* (SJP): " *wolność* 1. independence of one state (nation) from other states in both internal and foreign affairs; national independence, sovereignty." Personal "freedom" is presented by this dictionary as a separate and evidently less important meaning of the word: "2. the possibility, the right of unrestricted actions; personal independence, lack of restrictions."

I do not believe, however, that *wolność* is polysemous. In fact, even when used with respect to personal independence, this word retains its lofty character, and it can never be used with respect to any mundane, morally neutral "freedoms." "Freedoms" seen as relatively trivial would be referred to in Polish by means of the word *swoboda* (closer in meaning to the Russian *svoboda*, though by no means identical with it), not by means of the word *wolność*. For example, one could not replace *swoboda* with *wolność* in the following verse:

> Brysio młody wyje, szczeka, rwie się, dąsa
> i przeklęte więzy kąsa,
> i domaga się swobody!
> (Hertz, Bajki, quoted in SJP)

'Young Spot howls, barks, jumps, furiously tears
at his cursed ropes and demands freedom [*wolność].'

To the Polish "semantic ear," a dog's freedom doesn't have the "national and/or moral rights" ring which would justify the use of the word *wolność*.

Similarly, one would not use *wolność* in translating Pushkin's lines in *Eugene Onegin* referring to the enjoyable "freedoms" and relaxation of the life in the country:

Imeet sel'skaja svoboda
svoi sčastlivye prava.

'Country freedom possesses its happy rights.'
(Pushkin 1975:182)

Wolność brings to mind an oppressor and is normally associated with matters of "life or death" (especially death). As an extremely popular Polish song ("Red poppies at Monte Cassino") has it:

Bo wolność krzyżami się mierzy . . .

'Because *wolność* is measured by the number of crosses'
(i.e. crosses on the graves of those fallen in its defense)

(The reference is to the crosses on the graves of Polish soldiers fallen at the Monte Cassino battle in World War II.)

Nor can one speak in Polish of an *uczucie wolności* 'a feeling of *wolność*', as one can speak in Russian of a *čuvstvo svobody* or in English of a *feeling of freedom*: *wolność* is not a state which one could enjoy but an ideal, that is, something one wants (and has to struggle for).

The universalist character of the concept enshrined in the Polish word *wolność* is reflected in the syntax of this word, notably in its inability to take complements, whether of the negative type (*freedom from, svoboda ot*) or of the positive type (*freedom to*). (In this respect, *wolność* is similar, to some extent, to the present-day English *liberty*, but only to some extent.) From a Polish point of view, reflected in the Polish language, "wolność" is an absolute value, so the noun *wolność* can no more take limiting complements than nouns such as *sprawiedliwość* ('justice') or *honor* ('honor') do. Expressions such as *wolność od X* ('freedom from X') and *wolność do X* ('freedom of X, freedom to do X') are not unknown in Polish, but they are used only in philosophical literature, which often coins expressions in an artificial and arbitrary way, not in ordinary language.

Expressions such as *wolność sumienia* ('freedom of conscience'), *wolność wyznania* ('freedom of religion'), and *wolność słowa* ('freedom of speech') are fully acceptable, but here the modifier specifies a DOMAIN of freedom, rather than a concrete target of freedom. When the modifier specifies the target of freedom, the word *freedom* (or the word *liberté*) cannot be translated as *wolność*:

freedom to emigrate

la liberté pour emigrer

??wolność emigrowania, ?wolność do emigracji, ?wolność emigracji

I might add that the meaning of the word *wolność* which I have tried to explicate above differs from that which was encoded in the word *wolność* as it was used in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. For example, in the sixteenth century a writer could say:

> Tako daleko jako k temu mamy wolność, tego nie chcemy opuścić. (Ort Mac 64, quoted in Mróz-Ostrowska 1962:316)
>
> 'As far as we have freedom to do so, we don't want to fail to do it.'

But in contemporary Polish (where *k temu* 'to do so' would be rendered as *do tego*), one cannot say **wolność do tego*. It seems obvious that the moral and public (national) character of the present-day meaning of this word has developed in the course of the last two centuries, during which Poland's history was dominated by uprisings, and other forms of struggle for national freedom. To quote the British historian Norman Davies:

> Before the notorious Partitions of 1773–95 the United Republic of Poland-Lithuania was at once one of the largest states, and the home of one of the most extraordinary cultures, of the continent. In the period since the partitions, the Poles have been engaged in an endless struggle for survival against the empires, ideologies, and tyrannies of Eastern Europe, sustaining a national crusade of wonderful tenacity. . . . In the Second World War it fell victim to Nazi and Soviet aggression, and was condemned to become the Golgotha of Europe. (1981: cover)

It is worth recalling in this context Marx's and Engels' condemnation of the first Polish Marxists for renouncing the struggle for Poland's independence (as a precondition of any other freedoms). Engels explained his and Marx's position on this point as follows:

> Every Polish peasant or worker who wakes up from the general gloom and participates in the common interest, encounters first the fact of national subjugation. This fact is in his way everywhere as the first barrier. To remove it is the basic condition of every healthy and free development. . . . In order to be able to fight one needs first a soil to stand on, air, light and space. (quoted in Walicki 1984:230)

During the last two centuries, then, the value of personal "freedom" became linked in the Polish consciousness with the value of national "freedom," and the "national rights" aspects of "freedom" came to the foreground, making the word unsuitable for use in "trivial" and morally neutral contexts, or in contexts referring to purely individual "freedoms" and rights, as in the following example:

> While acknowledging that restrictions on alcohol sales in Aboriginal communities will limit the absolute freedom of individuals, the report says indigenous people are "increasingly demanding the right to address the problem of alcohol abuse in their communities from a collective perspective." (*The Australian*, July 11, 1995)

At the same time, a reverse development seems to have affected the word *swoboda*. In the nineteenth century it was still possible to use this word in elevated contexts referring to political and national "freedom," as in the following lines by Adam Mickiewicz:

Witaj jutrzenko swobody!
Zbawienia za tobą słońce.

'Hail, dawn of freedom!
The sun of salvation comes in your wake.'

But in contemporary Polish, *wolność* rather than *swoboda* would be used in a context like this. The concept encoded in the Polish word *wolność* as it is used in ordinary language can, I think, be explicated along the following lines:

wolność
(a) everyone wants to think something like this:
(b)   when I do something I do it because I want to do it
(c)   not because someone says to me: "you have to do it because I want this"
(d) it is very bad if people in a country can't think this
(e) it is very good if people in a country can think this

In support of the suggestion that the concept of 'wolność' may invoke, specifically, something like the notion of 'country' ('place'), I would mention another highly characteristic Polish concept which has no exact equivalent in English or in other European languages: the concept of 'niepodległość', (roughly 'national independence'). This concept, too, has positive and "normative" associations, and it clearly distinguishes a country's, or a nation's, independence from all other kinds of independence, the general Polish word for independence being *niezależność*. (Of course, the meaning of the word *country* is quite complex, but I have used this word here to highlight this aspect of the culture-specific Polish concept 'wolność'. For other references to the concept 'country', see chapter 4.)

In the Polish concept of 'wolność', the public (national) and the individual element are fused together. This sui generis character of the Polish word *wolność* clearly reflects the historical experience of a country where the personal fate of an individual was inextricably linked with the fate of the nation, and where often, as the greatest Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, put it, "szczęścia w domu nie było, bo go nie było w ojczyźnie" ('there was no happiness at home, because there was no happiness in the homeland') (1955, II:109).

Since the vital personal "freedoms" came to be so inextricably linked together with public and national "freedoms" in the basic word *wolność*, "trivial personal freedoms" had to be pushed to the margin of the semantic field in question, finding expression in the marked word *swoboda*. The pair *wolność/swoboda* reflects a polarization of concepts, which set apart temporary and superficial circumstances of a person's life (*swoboda*) from a basic existential condition (*wolność*).

The Polish concept of 'wolność' has a normative character: it is not a matter of what one CAN think but of what one WANTS to be able to think (component [a]); it has also universalist character ('EVERYONE wants to think something like this'). It refers to an oppressor (component [c]), and it links oppression with conditions prevailing in a country (components [d] and [e]). It is not a personal ideal, but one which has both universal and "local" (national) overtones. Unlike the English *freedom*, it has nothing to do with "options," and unlike the Russian *svoboda*, it has nothing to do with ease, absence of constraints, or "feeling good." At the same time, it is not a purely

intellectual ideal. There is something expressive, emphatic, almost hyperbolical about the word *wolność*. To account for these connotations, I have included the word *very* in components (d) and (e).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, when Polish nobility enjoyed privileges unheard of in most other European countries, these privileges were hailed, and usually referred to, as *Złota Wolność* 'the Golden Freedom'. (Davies [1981:207] calls the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth "The Paradise of the Nobility.") At that time, *wolność* did not stand for an ideal associated with struggle and sacrifice, but a privilege (for one stratum of the society) to savor and enjoy. But in twentieth-century Polish, *wolność* doesn't take the adjective *złota* 'golden' any more; over the last two centuries its connotations have become rather somber and heroic.

If, as Fedotov says, *volja* plays a key role in Russian culture as something that "every Russian heart responds to," similarly, *wolność* is a word to which every Polish heart responds (cf. Davies 1981, Garton Ash 1983, Benet 1953).[12] Only time will tell how long it will take for post-communist Poland to develop a new shared conception of "freedom" and for this to reshape the meaning of the word *wolność*.

9. Conclusion

Freedom does not stand for a universal human ideal. In fact, it doesn't even stand for a common European ideal, although European languages contain a family of related concepts centered on the idea that it is good for people to be able to do what they want to do. If we look further afield, even this vague common theme is often missing. For example, Australian Aboriginal languages appear to have no words corresponding even remotely to anything like *freedom*, *libertas*, *svoboda*, or *wolność*, presumably because the traditional Aboriginal way of life did not involve contrasts or conflicts which in the Western world led to the articulation of such ideals. In fact, even languages of complex modern societies such as Japan may have no words corresponding to something like *freedom*, or have them only as recent semantic and cultural loans, not at all entrenched in the commonly used lexicon. For example, in Japan the ideal of "freedom" appears to be culturally alien and not really consistent with the key Japanese values of *amae* ('loving dependence'), *enryo* ('nonassertiveness'), *on* ('infinite indebtedness to others'), or *giri* ('obligation to others'). (For a detailed analysis of all these concepts, see chapter 6.) In particular, the positive attitude to dependence, reflected in the concept of 'amae' (cf. Doi 1981), is seen as incompatible with a positive view of independence reflected in the modern Anglo concept of 'freedom'. Doi comments in this connection:

> The Japanese word *jiyū*, usually used to translate the English word *freedom* and other Western words of similar meaning, is of Chinese origin, but seems to have been used in Japan from an early date. . . . the word *jiyū*, judging from examples found in old Chinese and Japanese documents, often has, as Tsudo Sōkichi has pointed out, overtones that are to a certain degree critical. In this it is the exact opposite of "freedom" or "liberty," for which *jiyū* served as the translation following the Meiji Restoration but which in the West signify respect for the human being and contain no trace of criticism. For this reason the word *jiyū* has come in recent years to partake

in both its good, Western sense and its bad, Japanese sense, with a resulting extensive ambiguity in the concept itself. (84–85)

Drawing on Doi's discussion, another student of Japanese society elaborates:

> ... to think about *amae* also means that we must look into the cultural meanings of *freedom* as understood in the United States and Japan. Here freedom is the freedom to choose—which implies a degree of personal isolation and autonomy. You should, ideally, choose on your own, apart from the concerns of others or their preferred choices for you. In Japan freedom is the freedom to be indulged, to do as one likes within the bounds of a permissive relationship. Other Japanese concepts of freedom do of course exist, especially since Western influence has pervaded the Asian culture. But our notion of freedom pushed to the extreme seems full of loneliness and pointless to a culture where human relationships are the major wellspring and end of the value system. *Amae* in contemporary Japan may no longer be the complete and explicitly reinforced source of meaning in life; to some extent it has been replaced by borrowed ideologies of a different sort of individualism, especially for young people before the responsibilities of marriage and family. But *amae* still represents a very important personal value. (White 1987:24)

Although certain aspects of Doi's discussion of both *freedom* and *jiyū* have been questioned by Dale (1986:61–62), Dale's criticisms do not affect the main point, that is, that in pre-Meiji times, the word *jiyū* had critical overtones, and that in modern usage, influenced by the use of this word as a translation equivalent of *freedom*, it is ambivalent rather than unambiguously positive like *freedom*.

Words such as *freedom*, *libertas*, *svoboda*, and *wolność* are not idiosyncratic lexical items any more than *amae* is. They embody different concepts, which reflect different cultural ideals. The emergence of such concepts in a given language can be understood only against the background of the culture to which this language belongs, and they provide precious clues to the understanding of that culture.

But to be able to elucidate such concepts, and to reveal the cultural ideals embodied in them, we need a language- and culture-independent semantic metalanguage, which can free us from the ethnocentrism that usually creeps into discussions based exclusively on one particular ethnic concept, such as that encoded in the English word *freedom*.

The boundaries of my language are indeed, as Wittgenstein put it, the boundaries of my world; for every natural language—English, Russian, Japanese, or whatever— defines the boundaries of a certain conceptual and cultural world. But the boundaries between conceptual and cultural worlds CAN be crossed. My language doesn't have to be my conceptual prison. But this conceptual liberation can be achieved, and a "free," universal perspective can be reached, only to the extent to which we are able to rely on a semantic metalanguage which is language-independent and founded on universal human concepts.

Appendix

SUMMARY OF THE FORMULAE

libertas

(a) someone (X) can think something like this:

(b)   when I do something I do it because I want to do it

(c)   not because someone else says to me: "you have to do it because I want you to do it"

(d) this is good for X

(libertas2)

(a) someone (X) can think something like this:

(b)   when I do something I do it because I want to do it

(c)   I don't have to think: "I can't do something because someone doesn't want me to do it"

freedom

(a) someone (X) can think something like this:

(b)   if I want to do something I can do it

(c)   no one else can say to me: "you can't do it because I don't want this"

(d)   if I don't want to do something I don't have to do it

(e)   no one else can say to me: "you have to do it because I want this"

(f) this is good for X

(g) it is bad if someone cannot think this

liberty (older)

(a) someone (X) can think something like this:

(b)   if I want to do something I can do it

(c)   I don't have to think:

(d)   someone can say: "I don't want this"

(e)   I can't do it because of this

liberty (current)

(a) everyone can think something like this:

(b)   if I want to do something because I think it is good I can do it

(c)   no one can say: "this person can't do it because I don't want this"

(d) everyone thinks: this is good

freedom (older)

someone (X) can think something like this:

    if I want to do something, I can do it

    I don't have to think: I can't do it

svoboda

(a) someone (X) can think something like this:

(b)   if I want to do something, I can do it

(c)   when I do something, I don't have to think:

    I can't do it as I want to do it

    because some (other) people do/say something

(d) X feels something good because of this

*volja*₁

(a) someone (X) can think something like this:
(b)   if I want to do something, I can do it
(c)   if I want to go somewhere, I can go there
(d)   no one can say to me:
       "you can't do it because I don't want this"
       "you can't go there because I don't want this"
(e) this is good for X

*volja*₂

(a) someone (X) can think something like this:
(b)   I am not like some other people
(c)   if I want to do something, I can do it
(d)   if I want to go somewhere, I can go there
(e)   other people can't do it because someone doesn't want it
(f) this is good for X

wolność

(a) everyone wants to think something like this:
(b)   when I do something I do it because I want to do it
(c)   not because someone says to me: "you have to do it because I want this"
(d) it is very bad if people in a country can't think this
(e) it is very good if people in a country can think this