

**Menstrual Pollution, Soul Loss, and  
the Comparative Study of Emotions**

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## ASPECTS OF EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING

To speak of the emotional life is to talk about *felt* experiences. Three-year-olds, Ifaluk islanders, and psychoanalysts (in other words, almost everyone, except perhaps the staunchest of positivists) recognize that emotions are *feelings* (Lewis and Brooks 1978; Lewis and Michalson 1982; Lutz 1982). To understand the emotional life of a person is to understand the types of feelings (anger, envy, fear, depersonalization, shame, joy, love, homesickness, etc.) felt by a person, the distribution and frequency of those feelings across time and context, the kinds of situations that elicit those feelings, the wishes and fantasies that co-occur with those feelings, and the consequential action tendencies set off by those feelings.

Now, it is true that feelings cannot be seen: the only feelings we have direct experience of are our own feelings. I do not feel your feelings as you feel them and indeed I have no way to know for certain that you have feelings at all. I know that you move your face in complex ways, and change your posture and utter words like "pain" and "anger," but faces, postures, and words are not feelings—and it is the feelings that interest us, though they cannot be seen. For some, that fact marks the end of the study of emotions. Positivists, for example, committed to the "godforsaken" view that only what is perceivable is real, have forsaken the study of felt experiences and confined themselves instead to reports of that which can be observed, facial movements, heartbeats, and hormone levels. Most of us, however, are willing to live with assumption, inference, and conjecture, for the study of facial movements, heartbeats, and hormone levels takes on interest only if they can be used to draw inferences about things that cannot be observed—namely, how other people actually feel.

Conjecture plays a large part in our understanding. Some of our most fundamental ideas—the idea that contiguity in time and space implies causation, the idea that objects continue to exist in the absence of an observer, the idea that what you see is what I see—are conjectures. It is a conjecture that other people have an emotional life and it is a conjecture that trees and plants do not. Without conjecture there could be no understanding, and there would hardly be any point to studying emotions if we were unwilling to conjecture that other people's feelings, while unseen, are nevertheless there.

There are several aspects to emotional functioning and many distinct but compatible questions one can ask about the emotional functioning of a person or people. Six aspects or questions are listed below.

## 6

## Menstrual Pollution, Soul Loss, and the Comparative Study of Emotions

Richard A. Shweder

There are three general questions in the comparative study of emotions: (1) What is an emotional life? (2) With respect to which aspects of emotional functioning are people alike or different? and (3) How are these likenesses and differences to be explained? While this essay is concerned with all three of these general questions, it is the second question that receives the most attention.

It is argued that to ask whether people are alike or different in their emotional functioning is really to pose several more specific questions, that is, whether people are alike or different in the type of feelings they feel (the taxonomic question), the situations that elicit those feelings (the ecological question), the perceived implications of those feelings (the semantic question), the vehicles for expressing those feelings (the communication question), the appropriateness of certain feelings being felt or displayed (the social regulation question), and the techniques or strategies utilized to deal with feelings that cannot be directly expressed (the management question).

The semantic approach is illustrated, with special attention to feelings of "depression." The symptoms associated with feelings of "emptiness" are given meaning by reference to the idea of "soul loss." Finally, some speculations are offered about the way cultural practices convey meanings that influence the ontogenetic development of emotional functioning. The discussion focuses on the development of feelings about touching, "untouchability," and pollution among Oriya Brahman children and adults in the old temple town of Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India.

gratitude in others. Being the center of attention elicits embarrassment and fear in some, yet self-satisfaction and pride in others. In matters of love and loss, the Samoans experience what has been called a "generalized nonchalance" where Americans feel agitated and distressed (Geertz 1959).

One should not, however, rule out the possibility that there are some universal elicitors. The more one looks at the emotional life of young children around the world the more it would seem that certain situations are emotion laden in the same way, at least in the first few years of life. Loss (e.g., your mother or caretaker disappears, leaving you with a stranger) is experienced as distress. Frustration (a cookie is kept from you just out of reach) or confinement (someone forcibly keeps you from lifting your arms) is experienced as anger. Unexpected events (a sudden sound or "pop!" goes the jack-in-the-box) is experienced as surprise. The "visual cliff" elicits fear (Campos et al. 1975; Hiatt et al. 1979). In the first few years of life certain events seem to get interpreted in similar ways and experienced or felt in the same way by almost everyone. There are probably fewer "universal elicitors" for adults than for young children, yet even with adults one should not rule out the possibility that certain ideas are widely shared and certain emotions widely experienced. For example, the idea of "natural law" or sacred obligations may be a universal idea, and so may be the experience of shame-guilt-terror associated with the transgression of sacred obligations. And, while "irreversible loss" may imply or suggest different things to different peoples, certain of those implications or suggestions do have a worldwide distribution. There is a common thread of meaning to "bereavement"; as Rosenblatt et al. (1976) discovered in an examination of mortuary rites in seventy-three societies, in all but one society "crying" is a featured mode of emotional display and expression at funerals. Bali is the notable, and ambiguous, exception.

3. There is the *semantic* question: What do the feelings imply? To study the meaning of emotions is not the same as identifying the lexical labels (happy, sad, angry) that are used to refer to emotions and, as noted earlier, such lexical study per se is relatively uninteresting and probably unrevealing. To study what something means is to study what it implies or suggests to those who understand it (Hirsch 1967, 1976; Solomon 1976, 1984). To say that the bed is "soft and lumpy" is to suggest that backs may ache on it. To say that the ball is "hard" is to imply that heads may be cracked by it.

Sometimes the meaning of something seems to be in the thing itself.

1. There is the *taxonomic* question: What types of feelings do these people experience? The first step in any study of emotions is to document the range and types of feelings felt. Lexical studies can be quite misleading in such a taxonomic investigation, for there are documented cases (e.g., Robert Levy's Tahitians) of people who talk a lot about an emotion (e.g., anger) yet rarely experience it, or experience an emotion (e.g., guilt) yet have no word for it and rarely speak of it (Levy 1973:273-288, 1984; also see Beeman, chap. 7). A people's lexicon for emotions is a rather poor index of their emotional functioning.

It is a challenging fact about emotional functioning, a fact about which I shall have more to say later, that very young children display *situation-appropriate* facial expressions for a diverse set of discrete emotions. If you take a six-month-old child and hold a cookie just out of his reach or confine his arms to his sides, he will show you the face of anger. Not the face of pain or the face of distress, but the face of anger. The inference is nearly irresistible that by eighteen months of age, that is, prior to language learning, children experience and know the difference between anger, surprise, distress, interest, fear, and disgust. By the age of thirty months they experience jealousy, and by the time they are four years old they are quite competent at expressing through face, language, voice register, and posture a wide range of such emotions (Charlesworth and Kreutzer 1973; Cohn and Tronick 1983; Emde et al. 1976; Hiatt et al. 1979; Izard et al. 1980; La Barbera et al. 1976; Ochs 1982; Paradise et al. 1974; Sroufe 1979; Stenberg et al. 1983; Van Lieshout and Cornelis 1975).

It is also a fact about emotional functioning, and I shall return to this fact as well, that the type and range of emotions within the experiential repertoire of the young child are not necessarily the same as the types of emotions actually experienced by adults. Eskimo and Tahitian six-month-olds are probably capable of the experience of anger and may well experience anger more frequently than Eskimo and Tahitian adults (Briggs 1970; Levy 1973).

2. There is the *ecological* question: What are the emotion-laden situations for these people, and which emotions are elicited by which situations? The focus here is on the way situations are interpreted and experienced with one's feelings.

Obviously there are many culture-specific or person-specific elicitors. Not everyone finds the same situations emotion laden or feels them in the same way. Being offered help, being told what to do, being "mothered" elicits anger in some people, yet deference, respect, dependency, and

It's "square" implies "it won't roll. . . ." She's your mother" seems to imply "she ought to care about your health. . . ." Sometimes the meaning of something seems to be more in our head than in the thing itself. He's your "father" does not imply "secretly he wants to mutilate or castrate you or remove you from the scene," but that's what it means to some people. When the ideas suggested by something are widely shared, those suggestions become *implications*. When the suggestions are not widely shared, they remain *suggestions* or "free" associations. Nevertheless, whether we study (what has been called) "meaning-in" or "meaning-to," things often carry with them implications, suggestions, and associations, and that is what the study of meaning is about.

Emotions have meanings and those meanings play a part in how we feel. What it means to feel angry, indeed what it feels like to feel angry, is not quite the same for the Hmong, who believe that anger is so dangerous it can destroy society; for the Eskimo, who view anger as something that only children experience; and for working class Americans, who believe that anger helps you overcome fear and attain independence (Rosaldo 1980, 1984; Briggs 1970; Miller 1982).

Some emotions imply action tendencies. Surprise implies focus. Fear implies flight. Other emotions suggest certain wishes or fantasies. Anger suggests explosion, destruction, and revenge. Shame suggests exposure and banishment. Guilt suggests reparation, absolution, reintegration, and forgiveness. Sadness suggests withdrawal, self-criticism, loss, and the idea of being helped. These implications may or may not be universal. As in any study of ethnoscience, some implications will be widely shared and others will not. Jealousy takes on a special meaning when you believe that illness and death are the result of the envy of others, and that to wish someone ill is to practice witchcraft against them. Loyalty, respect, deference, and dependency do not have the same associations for autonomous, egalitarian Americans as they do for interdependent, hierarchical Indians. Shame does not have the same meaning for Americans, who tend to think they have a right to be let alone to do their own business and who have nearly reduced shame to embarrassment and blushing before the public eye, as it has for more traditionally bound folks, who believe that most of what they do is governed by natural law and who view with shame any action that discredits their standing in the natural order of things. The life of the emotions itself takes on a special meaning if you believe that emotions, *if unexpressed*, are dangerous and do not go away, or alternatively, if you believe that emotions, *if expressed*, are dangerous and do not go away.

4. There is the *communication* question: How are feelings expressed and what are the vehicles for the communication of an emotion?

There are many vehicles of emotional expression and communication—the face, voice register, body posture, words and sentences, and so on. Some expressive symbols we know how to read or interpret without much training or instruction. There is a common language (an "Esperanto") of the face, voice register, and body posture which is understood by nearly everyone, young and old, and I for one have little difficulty with the idea that there is "prior" knowledge of the code for reading *some* emotional expressions. Most three-year-olds can tell from certain common features of the voice, face, and body when someone is happy, sad, mad, or surprised; and even some of the metaphors for emotional expression ("down," "empty," "blue") may have a universal reading. D'Andrade and Egan (1974), for example, found that the colors associated with different emotions are very similar for Tzeltal-speaking Mayan Indians and English-speaking Americans. The way the visual experience of color is mapped onto, or used to express concepts of emotion (happy, worried, sad, frightened, angry), may not be all that variable either historically or cross-culturally. And even some of the notable, and often noted, exceptions to the rule (e.g., widows in India wear white, not black) may disguise a deeper similarity (e.g., the absence of gay hues or attractive colors). The association, for example, of red with anger and black (or white) with bereavement is no historical accident; the color-affect code is a code that very different kinds of peoples know how to translate and they translate it in a similar way.

Obviously, not all aspects of the code for communicating emotions involve "prior" knowledge. The language of deference and respect, for example, is highly developed in some cultures and there is simply no way to know the correct terms of address or reference without training or instruction. And not everyone bangs his head against the wall to express grief or knows what it symbolizes when someone else does it. And certainly some facial expressions are culture-specific and difficult to read without acquired knowledge of the code. For example, among the Oriya women with whom I have worked in Bhubaneswar, India, there is a facial expression of the following type: the tongue extends out and downward and is bitten between the teeth, the eyebrows rise and the eyes widen, bulge, and cross. It is the face of surprise-embarrassment-shame, a combination of feelings that might be felt by an American graduate student if she were to shout vulgar abuse at a passing motorist only to discover that the driver was her thesis advisor. That face of surprise-

embarrassment-shame appears on pictorial representations of the Hindu goddess Kali. Tongue out, eyes bulging, she is shown stepping on the chest of her consort Shiva. From the Oriya point of view, the representation is often "misinterpreted" by Western observers, who tend to see in Kali's face ferocity and demonic rage instead of the shock and shame she conveys to Oriya observers. It is noteworthy, nevertheless, that even many of the culture-specific aspects of emotional communication codes seem to get learned rapidly and early in life. Ochs (n.d.), for example, has examined the diverse ways affect is encoded in the Samoan language (via special affect particles, pronouns, etc.). Her important finding is that "with the exception of respect vocabulary, the entire set of affect features is acquired by Samoan children before the age of three years and 10 months."

Language is a very powerful means of emotional expression and communication. Most ordinary language utterances tell you how to feel about the things being discussed (Searle 1979; Labov and Fanshel 1977; D'Andrade 1981, 1984; Much n.d.). Among the less emotive aspects of ordinary language are the terms for emotions. There is nothing particularly "hot" about such words as happy, sad, angry, or surprised. They are far less evocative than saying of someone's wife that she is "past her prime" or talking about "little things that squirm in the night," or simply uttering, "I was brilling and the slithy toves did gyre and gimbel in the wabe." Nevertheless, despite variations in emotional intensity, there are very few ordinary language phrases that are without feeling tone, and even the most innocent descriptions ("she's my friend," "she's my mother," "she's my lover") tell you how to feel.

5. There is the *social regulation* question: What feelings or emotions is it appropriate or inappropriate for a person of this or that status to feel and/or display?

The having of certain feelings and the display of certain feelings are both subject to social regulation (Hochschild 1979). Social roles and role relationships, for example, carry with them a certain obligation to feel and/or express certain feelings and not others. One is not supposed to have sexual feelings toward blood relatives or express hatred toward a friend, and the emotions that get displayed have many implications for relationships. Respect is what inferiors express to superiors, not vice versa. Gratitude binds equals. Empathy links you to members of your own kind.

In thinking about the social regulation of emotions, it is useful to employ the often used metaphor of the "drama." To view life as a stage.

To view society as an arrangement of roles. To view social interactions as the enactment of role-based scripts. To view the communication of this or that feeling as quite distinct from the actual having of that feeling. The performance or spectacle we call "society" requires of its actors only the skillful, or at least competent, public display of appropriate feelings (e.g., empathy, seriousness, respect, loyalty), not the private experience of them. Consider, for example, the private experience of feelings of intimacy or closeness among various family members in Oriya Brahman households in the old town of Bhubaneswar, India. Informants were asked to rank the eight nuclear family dyads in terms of closeness or intimacy. As reported by married women and men, the most intimate relationship is between husband and wife. Next on the scale of intimacy or closeness come the four parent-child dyads (mother-son, father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter); the relative ordering of these dyads varies by informant. The least intimate relationships are the three sibling dyads (sister-sister, brother-brother, brother-sister); again, the relative ordering of these three dyads varies by informant.

It is tempting, even if hazardous, to speculate that there might be a universal patterning of subjective feelings of intimacy across the eight nuclear family dyads such that in all societies there is an ordering of private feelings of intimacy: spouse > child > sibling. The ordering of those dyads by Oriya Brahmans is, after all, quite similar to orderings given by Americans despite the obvious and substantial differences between kinship and family in Orissa and America. At some very general level there may well be something about the marital bond, the filial bond, and the sororal-fraternal bond that organizes feelings of intimacy into a common pattern.

What is more relevant for the present discussion, however, is that in Oriya Brahman families the public display of intimacy is not coincidental with the private experience of intimacy. Indeed, among Oriya Brahmans the husband-wife relationship is scripted for mild avoidance. Spouses may not eat together. They do not address each other by name. They never touch or display affection to each other in public. They move through social life separately; women stay at home and do not, for example, go to the marketplace or even attend the ear-piercing ceremony of their sons. Husband and wife rarely present themselves or appear in public as a "couple."

An important implication is that choreographed displays of avoidance or aloofness of the type standardly reported in ethnographies (see Whiting and Whiting 1975 for a cross-cultural analysis of husband-wife aloofness and intimacy) are not necessarily revealing of the underlying

private feelings of the actors, and it seems hazardous to interpret ritualized avoidance in terms of the psychodynamics of the actors. Oriya Brahman couples are far more likely to spend the night together in the same bed than to eat together. Bedding down together goes on in a realm defined as private, a realm where feelings of intimacy can be expressed. Eating goes on in a realm defined as public. The avoidance script applies—and there may be witnesses and gossip.

On stage, social actors communicate role-appropriate feelings; they do not necessarily experience those feelings, and they certainly do not convey everything they do feel. One suspects that if social actors did convey everything they actually felt, and only what they actually felt, the performance called "society," or at least the spectacle called "civilization," would be very difficult to mount. On stage, how you actually feel is far less relevant than how you act, far less important than the role appropriateness of the feelings conveyed by your actions. An Oriya Brahman feels "close" to his or her spouse but, in public, he or she cannot show it.

The problem of "avoidance," and its presumed opposite, the "joking" relationship, is a classic one in anthropology (Tyler 1889; Radcliffe-Brown 1940). Although there have been several noteworthy attempts at explanation and interpretation (Stephens and D'Andrade 1962; Driver 1966; Sweeiser 1966; Wilkowski 1972; LeVine 1984) the problem remains unsolved (for a brief overview on the limitations of current theory, see Levinson and Malone 1980:117–127). The area is rich with challenges.

For the most part, anthropologists have examined "avoidance" and "joking" in the context of kinship relationships. The more provocative findings (see Murdoch 1971; Goody and Buckley 1974) can be summarized as follows. In most societies of the world (80–90 percent), the mother-in-law/son-in-law and father-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships are marked by avoidance-respect-formality. In most societies of the world (roughly 80 percent) the relationship between a man and his wife's younger sisters or between a woman and her husband's younger brothers is marked by informality, joking, or sexual license. The affect display script for each of those relationships is pretty much the same kind of script across quite diverse societies, and the script for each of those relationships seems to transcend societal variations in descent system, residence pattern, religion, economy, political system, and so on.

In contrast, the brother-sister script is a bit more variable cross-culturally (although worldwide it tends in the direction of avoidance-formality-respect), while the scripts for a woman and her husband's

elder brother and a man and his wife's elder sister are highly variable from society to society. Societies with a matrilineal or bilateral descent system seem to promote avoidance-respect-formality between a brother and a sister; you do not joke around with your brother in societies where your children are going to inherit his property. Societies with patrilineal descent systems seem to promote avoidance-respect-formality with the wife's elder sister and the husband's elder brother.

What to make of all this? Any unifying theory of kinship avoidance has a lot of explaining to do. Why, for example, within a single community (e.g., among Oriya Brahmans) must a man treat his sister with informality, joke around with his elder brother's wife and wife's younger sister, yet avoid his younger brother's wife and wife's elder husband's elder brother more *variable* from culture to culture than are the scripts for a father-in-law or a husband's younger brother? A unifying theory should help us understand in a consistent way the meaning or function of any particular mode of affect display (avoidance vs. deference vs. informality vs. joking vs. abuse) and should help us relate each mode of affect display (e.g., avoidance vs. joking) to the underlying dynamics of the role relationship. By the "underlying dynamics," I mean the mix of necessary cooperation and unavoidable competition in the relationship, the relative balance of power or status, and the potential consequences or costs of a struggle or conflict over desired but limited resources. At the moment there is no unifying theory. Displays of emotions are socially structured and socially regulated; we still have much to learn about the dynamics of the choreography.

6. There is the *management* of emotions question: How are those emotions that are not expressed handled? We know, for instance, that certain feelings like anger or emptiness or envy are not displayed or directly expressed in some cultures, and it appears that the techniques for handling such emotions vary widely from denial to displacement to projection to somatization (LeVine 1973, chap. 17; Kleinman 1982).

The management of emotions question is, of course, a central one for culture and personality theorists (see, e.g., Whiting and Child 1953; Whiting 1964, 1977; Roberts and Sutton-Smith 1962a,b; Spiro 1965, 1983; Schweder 1979). Whether right or wrong, it is the main tenet of many culture and personality theorists that myths, rituals, games and religious beliefs, practices and symbols are "projective systems," that is, indirect ways of vicariously satisfying repressed wishes, disguised means for reducing anxiety or expressing deeply felt but forbidden

desires. If the culture and personality theorists are right, many cultural practices—from prayer to head-hunting, from monastic retreat to adolescent circumcision, from obedience to the Ten Commandments to professional football—exist, or at least persist, as cultural practices for the sake of managing emotions (dependency, hostility, latent homosexuality, anxiety over sexual identity, etc.) and providing them with a safe outlet.

The fate of felt-but-unexpressed emotions is still poorly understood. It is plausible to imagine that certain emotions are functionally interconnected: to imagine, for example, that sexual arousal lowers the threshold for anger or aggression; to imagine that certain emotions (e.g., anger) will not go away until they are expressed or "acted out"; or to imagine that if they cannot be acted out one way (e.g., killing your father) they will be acted out in a less dangerous way (directing the hostility against "outsiders") or transformed into something else (e.g., depression) (see, e.g., Silverman 1976, which presents evidence that the subliminal presentation of hostile or aggressive imagery magnifies feelings of depression in depressed patients). The problem is that it is just as plausible to imagine the opposite: to imagine, for example, that anger, if unexpressed, slowly dissipates and ultimately disappears. The stage of our knowledge in this area is so limited that in 1984 it is still possible for Rosaldo (1984) and Spiro (1984) to disagree about whether Freudian defense "mechanisms" are a generic property of the human mind.

Rosaldo (1984) examines emotional functioning among Ilongot headhunters in the Philippines. Adopting the position that culturally constituted ideas have a decisive influence on mental processing, she argues against the notion of a psychic unity to mankind, against the notion of a generic human mind. Presenting illustrative material she notes that the Ilongot "did not think of hidden or forgotten affects [i.e., anger] as disturbing energies repressed; nor did they see in violent actions the expression of a history of frustrations buried in a fertile but unconscious mind." Rosaldo holds out the possibility that the way feelings work among the Ilongot is different from the way they work in our own culture; that, for example, among the Ilongot anger is not repressed and displaced, that defensive processes are the product of a Western way of constructing a self. Spiro (1984) demurs, and argues for a generic human mind and an inherent mental machinery including repression, displacement, and projection. It is also imaginable of course that defensive processes are not automatic defense "mechanisms" (inherent in the machinery) but rather habitual defensive "strategies," and that the strategy of choice (e.g., denial or projection vs. sublimation or intellec-

tualization) may vary with a culture's construction of a self. Blame-externalizing defenses such as projection may be disapproved of in some cultures but not in others.

In sum, to ask whether people are alike or different in their emotional functioning is to ask whether they are alike or different in the types of feelings they feel (the taxonomic question), the situations that elicit those feelings (the ecological question), the perceived implications of those feelings (the semantic question), the vehicles for expressing those feelings (the communication question), the appropriateness of certain feelings being felt or displayed vis-à-vis certain types of relationships (the social regulation question), and the techniques or strategies utilized to deal with emotions that cannot be directly expressed (the management question). Undoubtedly there are universals and cultural specifics with regard to each of these aspects of emotional functioning. It is ludicrous to imagine that the emotional functioning of people in different cultures is basically the same. It is just as ludicrous to imagine that each culture's emotional life is entirely unique.

### THE LOST SOUL: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF DEPRESSION

In illustrating the semantic approach to emotions, I attempt here an explication of the meaning of depression and attempt to identify what depressed feelings are about. I suggest that the idea of "soul loss" helps us make sense of the subjective experience of depression and some of its associated symptomatology (see, e.g., Beck 1976; Gada 1982; Kleinman 1982; Marsella 1980; Mathew et al. 1981; Mezzich and Raab 1980; Orley and Wing 1979). I try to give some unity to reports about what it feels like to feel depressed (e.g., Jackson 1980; Leff 1980) and what these feelings imply about the self and the world.

When you feel depressed you feel as though your soul has left your body. What you feel is empty, and a body emptied of its soul loses interest in things, except perhaps its own physical malfunctioning as a thing. The phenomenon of soul wandering is widely acknowledged among the world's cultures, and the phenomenology of soul loss has, for millennia, been a topic of theoretical and practical concern. A sophisticated and nearly universal doctrine has emerged which has it that the body is routinely emptied of its soul at the time of death and while sleeping or dreaming. Despite all the historical and cross-cultural variations in theories of the soul, most religious and cultural traditions associate death and sleep with soul loss. Against this background of

common understanding it is perhaps not too surprising that when a fully conscious, awake person loses his soul, he finds it difficult to (is afraid to?) sleep or dream, and he spends much of his now extended waking time fantasizing about death and wondering why his soul has been withdrawn at such an uncanny time—while awake and still alive.

Emptied of a soul, some people fear they are "under description by God." Others think they are bad or evil people and this is their just dessert. Some imagine that the world is a lousy place in which it is impossible to have or keep the things you want, a place booby-trapped with unlooked-for disappointments, a place where striving is fruitless. Still others think there is an anime or a gene that has done it to them and that there must be some "thing" wrong with any "body" that cannot hang onto its soul. Some find comfort in the thought that it's the body and not the self that is to be blamed for suffering. Others wonder why such an unfair thing, a genetic deficiency, should have happened to them, and despair over the thought that life is absurd.

When your soul leaves your body you feel empty. "Emptiness" is a dark concept with many implications or connotations. It has spatial dimensions: to be empty is to be down (vs. up), low (vs. high), cut off (vs. connected), hemmed in (vs. free). It has a tactile feel: to be empty is to be dry and cold, not moist and warm. It has a familiar visual aura: to be "blue" or black. The idea of emptiness is rich in associations. It is passive and weak, sluggish and cheap, fragile, inert and headless. There are all too many testimonials to the felt implications of emptiness: to be empty is to be down, low, blue, cold, dried out, weak, cut off and alone, isolated without energy and without hope. It is to feel "depressed," "to feel the blood stagnate in your veins. It is to have "tired blood" (is Geritol a magical therapy for women with the "blues"?)

It remains to be seen whether these implications or suggestions are universal. I would not be surprised if they were. Osgood, May, and Milton's (1975) cross-cultural analyses of affective meaning in twenty-one societies is suggestive in that adjectives such as empty (vs. full), dark (vs. light), and low (vs. high) are widely experienced as bad or unpleasant, and it is not unlikely that there are synesthetic or associative connections among those and other concepts. There is also good reason to suspect that the metaphorical meanings of a basic orientational dimension like down (vs. up) (e.g., "I'm on top of the situation"; "Things are looking up") are not arbitrary, and that vertical (up/down) imagery is put to similar use in many societies. The human head is up. The gods are up. The heavens are up. The mighty are up. Control is up.

What's good is up (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980a,b; H. Schwartz 1981). I would not, of course, rule out the possibility that with deliberate effort (e.g., in folk therapy) intuitive feelings about the meaning of low, various religious traditions) intuitive feelings about the meaning of low, dark, down, and empty might be reversed or denied. It is also possible that in certain contexts the connotations can shift, perhaps radically. The relevant context of use for the present discussion, however, is the feeling of emptiness associated with soul loss, and soul loss, as we know, is widely associated with death and vulnerability. Of course, even death and vulnerability can, with effort, be infused with positive connotations, although typically that does not occur. People cry at funerals.

When you lose your soul you lose interest in things—basic things like food, sex, other people, and life's projects. You stop eating and you stop sex. You lose weight and you lose sleep. During *soulful* functioning there is a constant, even if barely noticed, perception of ourselves and others as "spirited," as a dynamic center of initiative and free will organized around an "I" (the observing ego). The "I" I refer to is that ghostly but familiar transcendental "I." It is transcendental because it is more than or other than a list of body parts or an assemblage of muscle and blood and skin and bones. It is the "I" that looks out at the world and out at the "me" in the mirror. It is that sense of pure yet distinctive subjectivity that makes it coherent, even if somewhat fantastic, to conjure up the image of retaining our identity while dwelling in someone else's body. During *soulful* functioning, that "I," that dynamic center of initiative and free will, works in concert with one's senses, reason, imagination, memory, and body. When the soul is lost that changes. "Dispirited," all that remains is the body and the mind, and a body and a mind do not function very well without will and initiative. You feel listless and tired. The brain goes. You have headaches. You can't think straight and you forget things. The senses go. Your vision blurs and you feel dizzy. The body goes. Your gut aches. Your back hurts. You feel weak, shaky, and short of breath. To function effectively, a mind and a body require a soul.

Emptiness gets expressed (or discussed) in different ways in different cultures, and there appear to be three ways to convey the feeling of soul loss. There is the language of *causal responsibility*, the language of *concomitant mood metaphor*, and the language of *physical consequences*. Emptied of your soul you can either dwell on the "why" of it all (Am I under description by God? Did I inherit this from my mother? Why can't I keep the things I love?), or generate concomitant mood



metaphors (I feel like I'm in a cold, dark room on a winter's night, down, dried up, blue, cut off; "made of glass"), or focus on what is left, a spirited body depleted of its normal appetites.

The cross-cultural literature on depression has a lot to say about the "somatization" of depression (Climont et al. 1980; Mezzich and Raab 1980; Kleinman 1982). To "somatize" depression is to talk about the perceived physical consequences of emptiness—sleep loss, weight loss, energy loss, loss of the appetites, headaches, back pain, dizziness, blurred vision, stagnating blood, and hunger for air. Some populations do it more than others.

One is more likely to focus on the perceived consequences of emptiness if you are nonwhite, non-Protestant and nonmale. Catholic women somatize more than Protestant women. Somatization occurs more in West Africa and Taiwan than in Minnesota. That there are individual and cultural differences in whether you dwell on the causes, dwell on the mood state, or dwell on the physical consequences is noteworthy; it may tell us something about individual and cultural differences in the perceived implications and consequences of *displaying* a feeling (social regulation) and in *managing* one's moods and emotions. For example, it is tempting to speculate that somatization is more likely when the direct expression of felt emotion is thought to be dangerous, threatening to one's social status and disruptive of social relationships with others. It is also tempting to speculate that the belief that felt emotions, if expressed, are dangerous is more common among those who believe that society is built up out of interdependent social rules and less common among those who believe that individuals in pursuit of their wants and desires are the fundamental units of society. The less "personal" the society the more dangerous it is to expose anything so subjective as one's emotions, and the more personal the society the more it will be viewed as healthy to emot. As Mr. Rogers has told many American preschool children: "Everyone has a history. Everyone has a name. Everyone has a story. No one's story is quite the same." Personal biography and affect display go together.

The idea of soul loss gives some unity to our understanding of what it is to feel depressed. It does not tell us why we have lost our soul or how to get it back, but it does tell us what depressed feelings are about. "Not so fast," the reader may object. "One cannot lose what one never had." To which the answer is: That's right. To feel depressed one must have had experience with the soul, and almost everyone has had that experience. Believing in the existence of souls is not quite like believing in fairies.

(Of course both souls and fairies have fallen into official accounts in

secular science-bound cultures like our own. Fairies have become the things of pretend, enchantment, medieval paintings, and children's stories. And the idea of the soul has come to be associated with theological doctrine, which means it is viewed by those of us who are secular and science-bound as prescientific, fuzzy-headed, and mystical, and thus hardly worthy of serious consideration.

Fairies should probably be left where they are, in children's stories; we seem to be able to get along quite well without them, and nothing in reason, experience, or direct intuition requires that we grant them more than a tongue-in-cheek reality. It would be a shame, however, to leave the soul in the hands of the theologians.

The presence of our own soul is something we know by direct intuition. That intuition is so widely shared and so compelling that each of us tends to perceive the actions of others as spirited, in ways that the reactive movements of billiard balls, robots, and computers are not. And that direct intuition of our own soul is powerful enough that it has shaped many of our social institutions. Indeed, if by some strange alteration of consciousness we were to start perceiving each other as billiard balls, robots, or computers, we would have to abandon the concept of free will and personal responsibility and we would probably have to strip society of its entire legal-moral fabric; for the concept of "crime" and the institution of punishment are both testimonies to our direct knowledge of our own souls and our faith that others have souls as well.

To acknowledge the reality of the soul it is not necessary to endorse any of the theological doctrines, specific articles of faith, or speculative ontologies that have grown up around the idea of the soul. It is not necessary to believe in a divine maker who reigns over the universe, or that each individual soul is the splintered fragment of a once unshattered universal soul, or that there is a place called "heaven" where souls reside, or that souls get recycled or transmigrate, or that they move into the bodies they deserve, or that bodies can be snatched or possessed by invading spirits. It is not necessary to believe that souls materialize or that they reside in some special gland or organ.

What it is necessary to believe can be summarized in three propositions: (1) Not everything that is real is material (has weight and extension in space); (2) The really real test of reality is not that something be material per se but that it have an effect on the way we understand, treat, and react to things that are; and (3) The reality of the soul is something that can be no more in doubt than the reality of ideas, values, and personal identity, and all other such real things that lack weight and

The young Leonardo da Vinci conducted several grotesque autopsies in the vain hope of finding some "thing" missing after the soul had left the body of the dead. He failed, and so has everyone since. If you try to find the soul with a scalpel, it will elude you. But, just as you can believe in the existence of "memories" without being able to say where they are when you are not having them, so too you can believe in "souls" without being able to say where they go when they wander or where they hide when they are home.

The idea of the soul is widely acknowledged even among those of us who are so secularized that we do not recognize the soul when we see it. It is what is involved when we see another person as a person and not merely as a highly intelligent robot. It is what we name when we give people a "proper" name instead of designating them with a serial number. For what is named is not merely an object, a thing in this world, but a subject as well; that subject (the so-called ghost in the machine), once properly named, continued to be honored and have influence (e.g., in "wills") long after the body or the machine is gone. It is the soul that is involved when we hold others responsible for their actions. It is what we honor when we respect another's privacy or freedom of movement. It is what we see in others when we look beyond their visible movements and see behind those movements a dynamic center of initiative and free choice. Call it the soul, the spirit, the transcendental ego, the subjectivity, the free will, or the "atman," it connects the person with things beyond and with others, and it is as real to each of us as it is immaterial. Lose it and you feel dead, cut off, alone, "dispirited"—depressed.

Lose it and you feel dead, cut off, alone, "dispirited"—depressed. Imagine one's "self" entering another person's body. Imagine retaining a continuous sense of "I-ness" while replacing in succession each and every cell in one's body. It is not that difficult to imagine such things because one recognizes within one's self a sense of self deeper than one's possessions, one's physical appearance, one's body parts, one's tastes, one's values, or one's goals in life, and one can vary each and every one of those things, or even give them up, and still retain a sense that something has remained the same. That is your soul and it is not a concoction by theologians or something that disappeared with the enlightenment or with the invention of machines or computers. It is a deeply intuitive idea and, apparently, a universal idea. It is an idea that makes the experience of depression something that everyone can understand.

Up to this point I have tried to characterize the meaning and the nomenclature of depression in terms of soul loss. Of course what I have

done is not unproblematic. I begged many questions. I did not tell you what caused depression or how to get rid of it. I did not tell you whether children get depressed or whether childhood depression is related to adult depression. I did not comment on the apparent worldwide predominance of depression among women, or explain why there is a sex difference in reported depression among adolescents and adults but not among children, or why reports of depression are more common among European women than among Chinese women. What I did do is tell you what the feeling of depression is about, and in doing so I implied that moods and emotions have meanings, that to understand a person's emotional life it is necessary to engage in conceptual analysis, and that it is possible to understand what it implies to feel depressed without knowing what "really" brought it on or how "really" to get rid of it.

I performed several sleights of hand. I accepted without comment the widespread practice of interpreting certain clusters of physical complaints (I'm tired, dizzy, and short of breath; I can't sleep; I'm losing weight; I don't care about sex) as the somatic expression of a depressed mood state. In other words, I took it for granted that there are alternative ways to express depression, for example, by focusing on causes, concomitants, or consequences, and that when a person tells you that he is under description by God he is expressing the "same thing" as someone who tells you he is cold, dark, and sad, who in turn is expressing the same thing as the person who tells you he can't sleep at night and has lost his appetite. Of course the three formulations are not even remotely synonymous: to lose your appetite is not quite the same thing as to feel sad or to believe that God has abandoned you. My warrant for linking these three types of formulations was that they expressed in three different idioms—causation, concomitance, and consequence—a concern for the same thing, the emptiness associated with soul loss. But notice that, while identifying a core meaning to depression, I ducked the question of whether depression means the same thing to two people who feel as though they have lost their soul, one of whom believes he is a bad person under description by God and the other of whom believes that soul loss is a fortuitous disease for which drugs are the only sensible response.

Notice too all the things I did not do. I did not try to link the three types of expressions of depression by referring to a common hormonal, chemical, or genetic condition; nor did I try to establish their equivalence by referring to a common eliciting condition (e.g., loss or learned helplessness); nor did I raise doubts about whether they really are expressions of the same thing or whether they should be linked at all.

Rather, having identified the semantic question as one among several that might be asked about emotional functioning, I tried to explicate the underlying meaning of a feeling and give some unity to our understanding of what it feels like to *feel* depressed.

### SEMANTICS AND EMOTIONS: A DEVELOPMENTAL PUZZLE

To this point I have identified six ways in which people may be alike or different in their emotional functioning, and I have given an example of the semantic or phenomenological aspect of emotional functioning with special reference to feelings of depression. In this final section I speculate about the ontogenetic origins of cross-cultural differences in emotional functioning. I consider the question: What is the role of cultural meaning systems in the growth of an emotional life?

To pose this question in the right way I would like to start with the image of an emotional "keyboard." Each of the keys is a discrete emotion: disgust, interest, distress, anger, fear, contempt, shame, shyness, guilt. A key is struck when a situation or object is interpreted in a certain way—as loss or frustration or novelty or as "a little thing that squirms in the night." There is evidence to suggest that for any normal member of our species the keyboard is intact and available by the age of four years (Campos et al. 1975; Charlesworth and Kreutzer 1973; Emde et al. 1976; Hiatt et al. 1979; Izard 1978; Izard et al. 1980; Ochs n.d.; Van Lieshout and Cornelis 1975).

Notice that the emotional keyboard of the young child is quite differentiated. Perhaps only simple tunes are played, but the young child knows the difference between the emotions listed above, and by four years of age probably experiences all of them. The image of growth as a movement from an undifferentiated system to a differentiated system seems as inappropriate for the development of emotions as it is for the development of cognition.

In recent years it has been discovered that the mind of the young child is far more differentiated than previously supposed (for an overview, see Shweder 1982; Gelman and Baillargeon 1983). Two-year-olds can distinguish the perspective of self from the perspective of others (Lempers et al. 1977; also see Shatz and Gelman 1973, on perspective taking in four-year-olds). Three-year-olds are able to distinguish intentional from unintentional behavior (Shultz 1980). Preschool children know the difference between conventional rules and moral rules (Nucci and Turiel

1978; Shweder et al. 1981). In fact, so many cognitive distinctions and competencies previously thought to be absent from the mind of the young child have now been discovered that a new image has emerged of the child's mind. What the young child lacks are not complex differentiated mental structures but the knowledge and representational skills needed for talking about and making deliberate use of the complex structures available to him. Given this new appreciation of the differentiated structures of childhood thought, it is perhaps not too surprising that young children are able to discriminate among basic emotions (happy, sad, angry, surprised, afraid, etc.) almost as well as adults (R. Schwartz n.d.). Indeed, in some cultures the emotional experiences of the four-year-old may be more varied than the emotional experiences of adults. Javanese adults, for example, according to Geertz (1975), strive to smooth out their emotions to a steady affectless hum. The goal is "an inner world of stilled emotions" in which the "hills and valleys" of an emotional life are "flattened out . . . into an even level plain." Describing the way a young Javanese man reacted to the death of his wife, Geertz seems to imply, with his reference to meditative and mystical techniques for smoothing the emotions, that even in bereavement the Javanese succeed, at least in part, at stilling their inner life and flattening out the feeling of distress in the face of irreversible loss. Presumably if we looked at Javanese four-year-olds we would find "hills and valleys," anger and surprise, distress and disgust, and many other discrete, differentiated emotions.

What is fascinating about the ontogeny of emotions is that, while a differentiated emotional keyboard may be available to most four-year-olds around the world, the tunes that get played and the emotional scores that are available diverge considerably for adults. Some keys do not get struck at all; the emotional symphonies that do get played are about as similar or different as Haydn is to Schubert or Mozart is to John Cage. Eskimos do not experience anger in situations in which Europeans would explode (Briggs 1970). On occasions where the Chinese feel sick, Americans feel depressed (Kleinman 1982). Wide variations are found in the hang-ups and anxieties of different peoples. Men in some cultures are hung up over their masculinity; in other cultures they are hung up over their dependency (Whiting and Child 1953). Semen loss and vaginal emissions are worrisome things to people on the Indian subcontinent; lack of semen loss is what worries Americans. Some peoples value formality and calm and dislike any strong expression of emotions; Samoans are nonchalant where we lose our cool (Geertz 1959). For some people, guilt has been bleached of everything but a rational concern for