This chapter elaborates, revises, and partially recapitulates an evolving description of the cultural psychology of the emotions, versions of which appeared in the first two editions of this handbook. We define and illustrate a cultural/symbolic/meaning-centered approach to the study of the emotions, using some sources that are quite ancient (e.g., the 3rd-century A.D. Sanskrit text, the “Rasādhīyā” of the Nātyaśāstra) and others that are quite new. The chapter updates a componential approach to the cultural study of emotions, with special attention to comparative analyses of two emotion categories: those often translated and labeled in English as “anger” and “shame.” The chapter also examines the moral context of emotional functioning in different cultural and religious traditions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam), while suggesting that the character and meaning of particular emotions are systematically related to the ethics (e.g., the ethics of autonomy, community, or divinity) prevalent in a cultural community (Haidt, 2001, 2003; Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Jensen, 1995, 1998, 2005; Shweder, 1990b, 1994a, 2002; Shweder & Haidt, 1993; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997).

The major goals of “cultural psychology” are to spell out the implicit meanings that give shape to psychological processes, to examine the distribution of those meanings across ethnic groups and temporal–spatial regions of the world, and to identify the manner of their social acquisition. Related goals are to reassess the principle of psychic unity or uniformity, and to develop a credible theory of psychological diversity or pluralism. The emphasis in cultural psychology is upon the way the human
mind can be transformed and made functional in a number of different ways, which are not equally distributed across ethnic and cultural communities around the world (see Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1998; Shweder, 1991, 1996; Shweder & LeVine, 1984; Shweder et al., 1998).

One hallmark of cultural psychology is a conception of “culture” that is symbolic and behavioral at the same time. Culture, so conceived, can be defined as the range of ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient that are made manifest in the speech, laws, customary practices, and other purposive actions of the members of any norm-sensitive and self-policing group (Goodnow, Miller, & Kessel, 1995; Shweder et al., 1998; Shweder, 1999a, 1999b). In research on cultural psychology, “culture” thus consists of meanings, conceptions, and interpretive schemes that are activated, constructed, or brought “online” through participation in normative social institutions and routine practices (including linguistic practices) (see, e.g., D’Andrade, 1984; Geertz, 1973; LeVine, 1984; Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990; Shweder, 1991, 1999a, 1999b). According to this view, a culture is the subset of humanly possible or available meanings that, by virtue of enculturation (informal or formal, implicit or explicit, unintended or intended), has become valued and active in giving shape to the psychological processes of the individuals in a particular norm-sensitive group.

A second hallmark of cultural psychology is the idea that interpretation, conceptualization, and other “acts of meaning” can take place rapidly, automatically, and un-self-consciously. Indeed, it is assumed that “acts of meaning” (e.g., the judgment that the human body may become polluted or desanctified because it is a temple for the soul; or that illness is a means of empowerment because it unburdens a person of accumulated spiritual debts; or that shyness, shame, modesty, and embarrassment are good and strong emotions because they are displays of civility signaling that people are playing their part in upholding and controlling the social order) can take place so rapidly, automatically, and un-self-consciously that from the point of view of an individual person they are indistinguishable from “raw” experience or “naked” consciousness itself (see, e.g., Geertz, 1984, on “experience-near” concepts, and Kirsh, 1991, on “thought in action”; see also Fish, 1980; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). According to this view, many rapid, automatic, and un-self-conscious psychological processes are best understood not as “pure,” “basic,” “fundamental,” or “intrinsic” processes, but rather as content-laden processes, which are contingent on the implicit meanings, conceptual schemes, and ideas that give them life (Haidt, 2001; Markus et al., 1998; Mesquita, 2003; Nisbett & Cohen, 1995; Shweder, 1990a; Stigler, 1984; Stigler, Chalip, & Miller, 1986; Stigler, Nusbaum, & Chalip, 1988).

As an initial illustration of these points, we begin our discussion in the 3rd century A.D. in India with a brief examination of a Sanskrit text (the “Rāsadhyāya” of the Nātyaśāstra) that was written relatively early in the historical record of systematic human self-consciousness about the emotions. It is through an analysis of this venerable text—an ancient example of a cultural psychology—that we address contemporary concerns. The “Rāsadhyāya” is a useful intellectual pole star on which to concentrate a discussion of the cultural psychology of the emotions, for three reasons: (1) The text, although ancient, compares favorably with any contemporary treatise on the symbolic character of emotional experience; (2) the text, although famous among Sanskritists and scholars of South Asian civilization, is hardly known at all by emotion researchers in anthropology and psychology; and (3) the text provides the opportunity for an object lesson about the universally appealing yet, in some sense, culture-specific character of all accounts about what is “basic” to the emotional nature of human beings.

THE CULTURALLY CONSTRUCTED “BASIC EMOTIONS” OF THE “RĀSĀDHYĀYA”

Between the 3rd and 11th centuries A.D., Hindu philosophers of poetics and drama, interested in human emotions as objects of aesthetic pleasure, posited the existence of eight or nine basic emotions (sāthāyī-bhāva) and developed a relatively detailed account of the symbolic structures that give them shape and meaning. There is no standard English translation of the Sanskrit terms for the postulated basic emotions. Indeed, there is no agreement about whether they should be translated as “emotions,” “mental states,” or “feelings,” or
about whether they should be translated as “basic,” “dominant,” “permanent,” “universal,” “natural,” or “principal” emotions (or mental states or feelings). The eight basic (or dominant) emotions (or mental states or feelings) are variously translated as follows: (1) sexual passion, love, or delight (rati); (2) amusement, laughter, humor, or mirth (bhāsa); (3) sorrow (śoka); (4) anger (krodha); (5) fear or terror (bhaya); (6) perseverance, energy, dynamic energy, or heroism (utsāha); (7) disgust or disillusion (jagupsā); and (8) amusement, wonder, astonishment, or amazement (vismaya). Some early medieval commentators mention an additional basic (or dominant) emotion (or mental state or feeling), (9) serenity or calm (sama). To simplify our exegesis, we refer to the eight (or nine) as “basic emotions,” and we label them “sexual passion,” “amusement,” “sorrow,” “anger,” “fear,” “perseverance,” “disgust,” “wonder,” and “serenity.”

The canonical Sanskrit text on the “emotions,” attributed to Bharata, is the sixth chapter, the “Rasādhīyā,” of the Nātyaśāstra, which is a book about drama. In Sanskrit drama, the primary aim of the aesthetic experience was psychological; indeed, it was the symbolic representation of emotional states per se that set the stage for aesthetic and revelatory experience (see Dimock et al., 1974). The famous sixth chapter of the Nātyaśāstra is about the narrative structure (the causes, consequences, and concomitants) of eight basic emotional states and the most effective means (via facial expression, voice, posture, setting, character, action, and physiological response) of their representation in the theatre. The Nātyaśāstra was probably written some time between the 3rd and 5th centuries A.D. The most famous of several commentaries on the text is by the 10th- and 11th-century Kashmiri Brahman philosopher Abhivanagupta (partial translations and contemporary commentaries can be found in Masson & Patwardhan, 1970, and Gnoli, 1956; see also Dimock et al., 1974, and Keith, 1924).

THE WONDER OF THE SANSKRIT EMOTIONS: A CULTURAL ACCOUNT

Contemporary non-Hindu researchers in the United States and Europe are likely to find the account of the “basic emotions” in the “Rasādhīyā” both familiar and strange. Indeed, one of the hazards of doing research on the emotions is the temptation to presumptively universalize a content-laden and culture-specific mental process and theorize that it is a basic or intrinsic mental process. Here we find it instructive (and a useful corrective to unbounded generalizations) to compare two such posited theories about “basic emotions” across historical time and cultural space. If we compare the Sanskrit list of nine (eight plus one) basic emotions (sexual passion, amusement, sorrow, anger, fear, perseverance, disgust, wonder, and sometimes serenity) with Paul Ekman’s well-known contemporary list of nine (six plus three) basic emotions (anger, fear, sadness, happiness, surprise, and disgust, plus interest, shame, and contempt), which Ekman (1980, 1984) has derived from the analysis of everyday facial expressions, the two lists do not seem to us to be closely coordinated, although they are not totally disjoint either.

In his volume Performance Theory, Richard Schechner (1988) presents a series of photographs of facial expressions that he claims are iconic representations of the nine basic emotions of the Nātyaśāstra. This, of course, is a risky thing to do. The Nātyaśāstra never abstracts out facial expressions as the key markers of the basic emotions, but rather treats them as one element in an array of constituents; and there is every reason to believe that in Hindu drama facial expressions unfold dynamically in a sequence of movements, which are not easily frozen into a single frame (Heijmadi, Davidson, & Rozin, 2000). Nevertheless, Schechner posits direct analogies between six of his facial expressions for the Sanskrit basic emotions and the six facial expressions from Ekman’s primary scheme—equating, for example, Ekman’s representation of the face of surprise with the Sanskrit face of wonder, and Ekman’s representation of the face of happiness with the Sanskrit face of sexual passion. Schechner thinks he sees a universal pattern reflected in the two schemes: He states, “Humankind has countless gods, but I would be very surprised if there were not some agreement concerning the basic emotions” (1988, p. 266). But how much agreement?

In our view, several of Schechner’s equations are dubious. For example, in Ekman’s face of surprise, the mouth is wide open; it is not similar to the mouth of the Sanskrit emotion of wonder, which is closed and faintly suggestive of a smile. (The mouth is closed in all of the fa-
cial expressions of the medieval Hindu emotions, which, we speculate, may be related to a cultural evaluation concerning the vulgarity of an open mouth.) And in Ekman's photo of the face of happiness, the eyes are directly frontal; they are not similar to the eyes of the Sanskrit emotion of sexual passion, where the gaze is conspicuously averted to one side, perhaps suggestive of coyness, secrecy, or conspiracy. More importantly, because Schechner's equation of American “happiness” with Sanskrit “sexual passion” seems peculiar from the start, it should also be noted that Ekman's photo of the face of happiness bears no resemblance whatsoever to the face of amusement, which is the Sanskrit emotion one might have intuitively expected to be connected to the Western conception of “happiness.”

We doubt that most Americans could spontaneously generate accurate descriptions for the majority of the nine facial icons of the Sanskrit “basic emotions” displayed in Schechner's book. (Curiously, one of the faces that American graduate students seem to identify without much difficulty is the Sanskrit face of serenity, which as far as we know is not a “basic emotion” on any Western list. In informal experiments conducted in classes at the University of Chicago, they also converge in their responses to faces of fear, disgust, and sorrow, but not to the other five.) Indeed, we believe one can plausibly argue that happiness, surprise, and most of the other basic emotions on Ekman's list do not have close analogues among the basic emotions of the “Rasādhīyā,” and any sense of easy familiarity with the Sanskrit list is more apparent than real.

As we read the “Rasādhīyā” and commentaries, three of the nine basic emotions (anger, fear, and sorrow) are genuinely familiar, in the sense of possessing an equivalent shape and meaning for medieval Hindus and contemporary Americans. Of course, to acknowledge those three points of dense similarity is not to suggest that those three emotional meanings must be cross-cultural universals. Wierzbicka (1992) has brought to a halt facile claims about translation equivalence by showing that “sadness” as understood in European and American conceptions of the emotions is not an empirical universal and is neither lexicalized, important, nor salient in most of the languages of the world. She claims that from the point of view of the study of the linguistic semantics of emotion terms around the world, there may be no basic or universal emotions, although she allows that feelings that are more or less “shame-like” are quite widespread.

Nevertheless, anger, fear, and sorrow are easy to recognize in the “Rasādhīyā.” Sorrow, for example, is said to arise from misfortune, calamity, and destruction, and from “separation from those who are dear, [their] downfall, loss of wealth, death and imprisonment.” It should be acted out by tears, laments, drying up of the mouth, change of color, languor in the limbs, sighs, loss of memory, etc.” (Masson & Patwardhan, 1970, p. 52). Sorrow is said to be accompanied by other mental states, including world-weariness, physical weariness, lifelessness, tears, confusion, dejection and worry. Anger and fear are also easy to recognize in the text (see Masson & Patwardhan, 1970, pp. 52–53).

For three of the nine basic emotions described in the “Rasādhīyā,” it is easy to recognize the underlying script, to readily see the self in the other, and to arrive at a cross-cultural and transhistorical agreement about what is basic in emotional functioning (at least for them and us). Yet as one moves beyond sorrow, anger, and fear to disgust, amusement, wonder, perseverance, sexual passion, and serenity, the way in which consciousness is partitioned or hierarchically structured into basic and nonbasic states in the “Rasādhīyā” seems less and less familiar, despite any initial appearances to the contrary. This decline in familiarity is similar to the “gradient of recognition” that Haidt and Keltner (1999) found when studying facial expressions in India and the United States: Some expressions are very well recognized across cultures, some are less well recognized, and there is no neatly bounded set of “universal” facial expressions.

Thus it becomes clear upon examination of the relevant Sanskrit texts and commentaries that medieval Hindu “disgust” overlaps with but also differs from modern American “disgust.” Medieval Hindu disgust is partitioned into two subtypes. The first includes aspects of horror and disillusionment, as well as world-weariness associated with the quest for detachment, transcendence, and salvation; the second includes horror at the sight of blood. Medieval Hindu disgust is, as the anthropologist McKim Marriott has suggested to us, more like a domain of the loathsome, and it gathers together within its territory a broad range of human responses to the ugly, the nasty, and the odious.
It also becomes clear upon close examination that nuances make a difference, and that medieval Hindu "wonder" is not contemporary American "surprise," but rather a state of mind closer to admiration than to startle or shock. For Hindu wonder has less to do with a sudden violation of expectations and more to do with one's reactions to the opportunity to witness divine, heavenly, or exalted feats, events, or beings (including, e.g., the amazing feats of a juggler). It is even possible to do such witnessing with the mouth closed, as long as the eyes are wide open!

Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent as well that medieval Hindu "amusement" (which includes contemptuous, indignant, or derisive laughter at the faults and inferior status of others) is not contemporary American "happiness," which has celebratory implications. Indeed, happiness, shame, indignation, arrogance, and some contempt-like emotions are explicitly mentioned in the "Rasādhīya" for inclusion among 33 nonbasic ("accompanying") mental states. Thus it seems reasonable to assert that the basic emotion designated by medieval Hindu philosophers as "amusement" is not adequately translated as "happiness" or as "contempt." (It should be noted that while the text provides little basis for determining equivalence of meaning for the terms used to translate the 33 nonbasic mental states, there is good reason to doubt that "shame" or "happiness" have the same implications and associations, or play the same psychological role, in India as they do in the contemporary United States. See Menon & Shweder, 1994, and Shweder, 1996, 2003, on the positive qualities of "shame" in India, where it is a virtue associated with civility, modesty and an ability to rein in one's destructive powers in support of the social order rather than with the diminishment of the ego; see also Parish, 1991, and below.)

Similarly, it becomes clear upon examination of the text that medieval Hindu "perseverance" is not contemporary American "interest," but is rather deeply connected to heroic determination and a willfulness to engage in acts requiring endurance and self-sacrifice. In the context of the early medieval Hindu scriptures, when the Hindu goddess Durga (or Kali) endures trials and tribulations yet persists in a seemingly hopeless battle against uncountable demons in an effort to save the world, her efforts are said to display the heroic rasa of perseverance. Mere interest has very little to do with it. She would probably rather be doing something else (see below).

In summary, the two lists of nine basic human emotions closely and truly overlap at only three points. All the other apparent points of similarity (amusement as happiness, their disgust as our disgust, wonder as surprise, perseverance as interest) turn out to be merely apparent; and for several of the emotions (sexual passion, serenity, shame, contempt), there is not even an illusion of transcultural equivalence. In the end, most of the items cannot be easily mapped across the two lists without a good deal being lost in translation.

There are other ways in which the "Rasādhīya" presents us with a somewhat unfamiliar portrait of the way consciousness is organized. According to the text and commentaries, the four primary basic emotions are sexual passion, anger, perseverence, and disgust. The four secondary basic emotions are amusement, sorrow, wonder, and fear. The ninth basic emotion, serenity, is sometimes viewed as a primary basic emotion and either substituted for disgust or associated with disgust (through a causal sequence that begins with horror and revulsion over attachments in the world, and ends with the serenity of ego alienation, detachment, and salvation).

In commenting on this scheme, it is worth noting that Sigmund Freud might find much of value in a conception of human personality that treats sexual passion and anger (and perseverance and disgust) as the deepest aspects of human experience. One wonders whether Freud would have interpreted perseverance and disgust as analogues to the life and death instincts. More notable, however, is the fact that the primary basic emotions are thus named because they are the "emotions" associated in classical and folk Hindu thought with the four worthy ends or goals of life. One of those goals of life—pleasure (kāma)—is linked to sexual passion. A second goal—control, autonomy, and power (artha)—is linked to anger. A third goal—social duty and moral virtue (dharma)—is linked to perseverance. The fourth and perhaps highest goal—purity, sanctity, salvation, or the attainment of divinity (moksha)—is linked to disgust and/or serenity. In other words, presupposed by this famous formulation about the organization of human emotions is a special and local theory of morality and human motivation and a specific way of life. Thus it is hardly surprising that this particular medi-
eval South Asian conception of the hierarchical structuring of consciousness into basics versus nonbasics and primary basics versus secondary basics should seem somewhat strange or alien to emotion researchers in North America, and vice versa. In other words, in the “Rasādhyāya” one finds a relatively elaborate account of the symbolic structures that give shape and meaning to a selected subset of mental experiences, which, because they have been privileged for local symbolic elaboration, have become transformed into mental experiences that people regard as “basic” in their particular culturally constituted world.

COMPARING AMERICAN “ANGER” AND TIBETAN LUNG LANG

The strategy adopted in the “Rasādhyāya” is to define a basic emotion by the implicit symbolic structure that gives shape and meaning to that emotion, and then to define that symbolic structure by resolving it into its determinants, consequences, and accompanying side effects. This strategy is directly parallel to various contemporary approaches to the cultural psychology of the emotions.

One aspect of this symbolic (or “cognitive,” “interpretive,” or “meaning-centered”) approach is the view that kinds of emotions are not kinds of things like plants or animals. Instead, they are embodied interpretive schemes of a particular script-like or narrative form that give shape and meaning to the human experience of those conditions of the world that have a bearing on self-esteem (see Shweder, 1994b). The components that are proposed as slots in these emotion schemes may vary slightly from scholar to scholar, although most of the components or slots in use today can be found in the “Rasādhyāya.”

Mesquita and Frijda (1992; see also Ellsworth, 1991; Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Lewis, 1989; Lewis, Sullivan, & Michelson, 1984; Lutz, 1985; Russell, 1991; Stein & Levine, 1987), for example, parse each emotion script into a series of components including “antecedent events,” “event coding” (type of condition of the world), “appraisal” (judged implications for self-esteem and well-being), “physiological reaction patterns,” “action readiness,” “emotional behavior,” and “regulation.” Shweder (1994b) suggests a parsing of emotion scripts into components such as “self-involving condi-

tions of the world” (e.g., loss and gain, protection and threat), “somatic feelings” (e.g., muscle tension, pain, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, breathlessness), “affective feelings” (e.g., agitation, emptiness, expansiveness), “expressive modes” (e.g., face, posture, voice), and “plans for self-management” (e.g., to flee, to retaliate, to celebrate, to invest). (See also Shweder, 1991, where a slot is provided in the emotion narrative for variations in “social regulation” or the normative appropriateness of certain emotions being experienced or expressed.)

The primary assumption of the symbolic approach is that the “emotion” (e.g., sadness, fear, or love) is not something independent of or separable from the conditions that justify it, from the somatic and affective events that are ways of being touched by it, from the actions it demands, or the like. The “emotion” is the whole story: a kind of somatic event (fatigue, chest pain, goose flesh) and/or affective event (panic, emptiness, expansiveness) experienced as a perception of some antecedent conditions (death of a friend, acceptance of a book manuscript for publication, a proposition to go out to dinner) and their implications for the self (e.g., as loss, gain, threat, possibility), and experienced as well as a social judgment (e.g., of vice or virtue, sickness or health) and as a kind of plan for action to preserve one’s self-esteem (attack, withdraw, confess, hide, explore). The “emotion” is the entire script. It is the unfolding experience of all the components, or, perhaps more accurately, the cohesive experience of the whole package deal.

A second aspect of the symbolic approach is the view that any “emotion” is decomposable into its components, and that these components are what must be compared when we ask whether two emotion experiences are the same or different across cultures. Based on earlier work by Shweder (1994b) and recent work by Horton (2006) attempting to integrate perspectives on emotion from across the fields of cognitive psychology and psychological anthropology, we find it useful to posit eight relevant components, which we describe below. We then illustrate the utility of this approach by using it to compare the emotion of “anger” (as it is experienced and understood by a sample of urban American adults) with the Tibetan emotion lung lang (as it is experienced and understood by Tibetan refugees [lairy and religious virtuosos] settled in India). The eight components are as follows:
25. The Cultural Psychology of the Emotions

- **Component 1: Somatic experience.** Are people alike or different in introspectively and objectively observable physical changes (e.g., muscle tension, headaches, blood pressure shifts, activation of specific neural pathways) when they experience the emotion?

- **Component 2: Affective phenomenology.** Are people alike or different in their affective experiences (e.g., feelings of emptiness, calm, pleasantness, derealization, soul loss) when they experience the emotion?

- **Component 3: Environmental determinants.** Are people alike or different in the antecedent conditions associated with the emotion (e.g., winning the lottery, a remark from a subordinate, birth of a child, physical contact with a member of an outcaste group)?

- **Component 4: Appraisals of significance.** Are people alike or different in the appraisals of the antecedent conditions that elicit the emotion, and in ongoing construals that may inflect, extend, transform, or truncate the experience (e.g., others’ actions were intentional, unwanted, goal-enhancing, expected, disrespectful, or status-degrading; the outcome can or cannot be changed)?

- **Component 5: Normative social appraisals.** Are people alike or different in the extent to which showing, displaying, or merely experiencing the emotion has been socially designated as a vice or virtue or as a sign of sickness or health?

- **Component 6: Self-management.** Are people alike or different in the impulses to action and plans for self-management that get activated in association with the emotion (e.g., to celebrate, to attack, to disengage and avoid the other person, to engage in problem solving)?

- **Component 7: Communication and symbolization.** Are people alike or different in the iconic and symbolic vehicles used for giving expression to the emotion (e.g., facial expressions, voice, posture, and action)?

- **Component 8: Social management.** Are people alike or different in the ways they respond to and manage the communication and symbolization of the emotion by others (e.g., empathically mirroring the emotion, cowering, withdrawing, discussing an individual’s behavior with others, collectively shunning the individual)?

Depending on the interests and methodological commitments of investigators, any of these eight domains can be elaborated further. In extending the seventh component domain (communication and symbolization), for instance, one could ask: Are the cultures alike or different in the symbolic resources they accord their members for naming, evoking, and manipulating discrete facets of the emotional experience for the achievement of important social and individual goals (e.g., through meditations on compassion, death metal concerts, workshops on assertiveness training or anger management, mass political demonstrations, initiation rites, or vulnerability to dissociative states in which the emotion is prominent)?

We recognize that this componential model includes facets of emotion-related experience that many psychological researchers might resist including in a conceptual or analytic definition of emotion. From the perspective of the hybrid symbolic/interpretive/meaning-centered view of emotion that we are advancing, emotional experience is not analytically dissoluble from either the conditions that justify it or the social meaning systems that sustain it. This model offers a context-rich, maximally inclusive characterization of emotional experience—one in which elements of sociocultural and linguistic context provide the necessary background against which one can perceive local variations and transformations of the figural center of emotive processes.

The model can provide a useful framework for comparing emotional experiences not just across cultures, but within cultures as well. Horton (2006) has recently used the model to compare “anger” across three groups of individuals: a sample of American adults living in a mixed urban ethnic community, a sample of lay Tibetan refugees living in long-term settlements in India, and a sample of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns living in the same Indian communities.

The Tibetan emotion term lung lang (Wylie, 1959, gives it as lung langs) is used by all classes of Tibetans living in the exile settlements of South Asia. It has a denotative breadth similar to that of the English “anger,” and almost all modern bilingual dictionaries render it in English as simply “to get angry.” The Tibetan expression, however, is actually a conceptual composite derived from two lexemes. The term lung, which denotes the wind humor in the Tibetan ethnomedical system, is joined with the intransitive verb langs pa, which means “to rise.” The combined expression lung lang thus invokes an underlying
psychophysiological model of the emotion as a rising movement of the wind that animates consciousness, upward from the chest. This underlying model articulates with cultural understandings of the sources of vulnerability to chronic anger, the expected long-term effects, and the phenomenology of the experience of the emotion.

In the following discussion, we compare anger and lung lang, using the eight components listed above to reveal a complex pattern of similarities and differences. We begin with the domain of normative social appraisals. We do so because we believe that examining the moral and ethical construals of anger in American culture versus lung lang in Tibetan culture provides a crucial background for understanding observations in the other component domains.

Component 5: Normative Social Appraisals

Tibetan and American respondents were asked, “In general, if you think about anger/lung lang, do you think of it as a good or a bad thing?” They were then asked, “For what reasons is it good or bad?” Citing views grounded in Mahayana Buddhist ethical and metaphysical thought, Tibetan respondents, both lay and clerical, unequivocally viewed lung lang as morally bad. They assimilated it to the sentiment she dangs (anger/hatred), one of the “three moral poisons” (dug gsum) that are commonly accepted by Buddhists to be the root sources of all suffering for sentient beings. Americans, by contrast, viewed anger as a morally ambivalent, neutral, or natural process. Although Americans recognized the potential harmful effects of anger for others, they were less likely than Tibetans to insist on its harmful effect for the person who experiences it. Indeed, Americans emphasized several positive aspects of anger: It gives one an energy that can be used in a positive way; it can lead to problems’ being addressed that might otherwise persist; it can be beneficial to society. Tibetans, by contrast, viewed lung lang as a fundamentally destructive sentiment, equally harmful to self and others. They viewed it as arising from an intrinsically flawed motivational state (a desire to harm another sentient being) and generative of ultimately bad results. Reflecting upon metaphysical understandings of karma, they insisted upon the symmetry of lung lang’s ill effects for all parties involved.

In response to the question “If a person gets angry a lot, over and over again, what kinds of things might happen to that person?”, Tibetans and Americans were alike in predicting adverse social and health effects. In fact, the most common metaphorical expressions for the anticipated adverse social effects of chronic anger/lung lang in the two cultures were identical. Tibetans and Americans agreed that people will “become more distant” (Tibetan: thags ring po chags) from the chronically angry individual. For Tibetans, these predicted social effects tended to involve community-level judgments and processes.

Although norms and expectancies were relatively easy to compare across cultural groups, comparing the two emotions across many of the remaining component domains required a somewhat different procedure. The researcher asked American and Tibetan respondents to discuss in detail a recent situation in which they had felt anger/lung lang. The interviewer probed for background information on the circumstances in which an incident occurred, who was involved, and particular judgments and appraisals that might have guided respondents as they felt the emotion. The interview assessed their subjective physical and affective feelings in the situation, as well as their fantasies, actions and impulses, the reactions of bystanders and other individuals in the situation, and the eventual resolution of the situation. Coded and scored, these data provided the basis for systematic tests of differences across sample groups.

Component 1: Somatic Experience

Tibetan lung lang and American anger displayed considerable overlap in the domain of somatic experience. Feelings of tension, shaking/nervousness, and heat were reported as common somatic feelings experienced with anger/lung lang in all three groups. Americans, however, produced a broader, more detailed range of descriptions of physical feelings associated with anger.

In terms of the long-term anticipated somatic effects of anger/lung lang, individuals from both cultures predicted bad health effects for chronically angry individuals. Some predicted effects were common across all three groups (e.g., heart disease, blood pressure problems) while some differed. Many Tibetans
predicted that such individuals would suffer from *srog lungs na tsha* (literally, a life-wind illness), a serious condition defined in Tibetan ethnomedical tradition. Several Tibetan respondents also asserted that the chronically angry individuals would be likely to die prematurely. Given the list of illnesses that Americans associate with chronic anger, it likewise would have been logically consistent for Americans to connect chronic anger directly with premature morbidity. Yet no American respondents made this connection.

Component 2: Affective Phenomenology

In contrast with other groups, several individuals from the Tibetan clerical sample described the experience of anger in dissociative terms (e.g., “It felt as though I were drunk or crazy at the time”). When asked, “When that situation had just ended, how did you feel?”, Americans were far more likely than were Tibetans to report feelings of lingering anger. Tibetans (particularly the Buddhist clergy) were more likely than Americans to report feeling a host of other dysphoric emotional states at the end of the anger incidents. These included emotions similar to the sentiments lexicalized in English as “regret,” “shame,” and “unhappiness.”

Lingered differences in the encoding and retrieval of memories of experiences of anger/*lung lang* were suggested by the fact that when respondents were asked, “If you think about that situation now, do you still feel a little angry?”, Americans were much more likely than Tibetans to say that they still felt angry when recalling the original situations. Americans did so whether the original feelings of anger were intense or mild. For Tibetans, the likelihood of feeling *lung lang* upon recalling the situation appeared driven by the strength of the feelings of *lung lang* in the original situation. Only in situations where original feeling of *lung lang* had been strong were Tibetan respondents likely to feel anger on recall.

Component 3: Environmental Determinants

The failure to meet obligations and disrespectful treatment by others were among the most common provocations to anger/*lung lang* in both cultures. For Tibetans, the experience of public criticisms and teasing (*kyag kyag*) that had gotten out of hand played a disproportionate role as provocations. For Americans, a waste of the respondents’ time served as a more common provocation. Tibetans reported particular difficulties with outgroup incidents of anger, reflecting tensions between the themselves and members of the local ethnically Indian communities where they live. Socially, *lung lang* incidents displayed an asymmetric, hierarchical character not apparent in American anger incidents. Lay Tibetan respondents reported no incidents of feeling the emotion toward Buddhist monks or nuns, yet Tibetan monks and nuns readily reported such feelings toward lay individuals.

Component 4: Appraisals of Significance

Respondents from both cultures showed a reluctance to attribute a deliberate intent to harm the other party in the incidents they described. Across all groups, however, respondents rated their feelings of anger/*lung lang* as stronger when they said they had made such an attribution. Cultural differences in at least one variety of secondary appraisals were evident as well. Tibetans, both lay and clergy, were much less likely than Americans to judge the other person’s provocative actions as typical or usual for that person. American respondents, by contrast, tended—chronically and spontaneously in open narratives—to connect the other person’s provocative behavior in the current situation with the person’s past behavior, and to assert that a dispositional pattern existed for the individual to act in that way. This attribution bias is consistent with prior cross-cultural research on the fundamental attribution error (cf. Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Miller, 1984). Collectively, this line of emerging research suggests that Americans make character-based, enduring dispositional attributions far more frequently than members of certain other cultural groups do.

Component 6: Self-Management

Tibetans were much more likely than Americans to believe that anger/*lung lang* can be prevented and even permanently transcended. Furthermore, many were able to point to individuals whom they believed had achieved such a state. Americans, by contrast, doubted whether anger-free living was either possible or
desirable. When the hypothetical question "What kind of person would it be who never becomes angry?" was posed, Americans offered responses like these: "People who don't show it and then one day they explode," or "Maybe someone who was severely abused as a child." Some rejected the question outright, saying, for example, "We shouldn't be talking about this like it's a good thing." American respondents thus actively pathologized the hypoexpression of anger; in contrast, the notion that the absence of feelings of anger could be pathological was rejected quite thoroughly by the Tibetans.

Although Americans and Tibetans endorsed different ideal strategies for managing the emotion, in practice they appeared similar in many of the action tendencies and behaviors they reported engaging when the emotional experience had been triggered. Actions ranged from taking time out, practicing patience (a set of specific Tibetan Buddhist techniques), and seeking mediation, to issuing open criticisms or threats and (in some cases) exchanging blows with the other party. Tibetans reported a significantly shorter duration for feeling anger/lung lang than Americans in the incidents they described. Tibetan clergy reported significantly less intensity of anger/lung lang feelings than Americans or lay Tibetans.

Component 7: Communication and Symbolization

The two cultures accord their members radically different resources for naming, evoking, and manipulating discrete facets of the experience of anger/lung lang. If one considers the diverse American social practices in which anger plays a central role (e.g., in spectacle entertainments like The Jerry Springer Show, death metal concerts, or professional wrestling; in therapeutic contexts like psychotherapy groups for children of alcoholics or anger management classes; or in diagnostic categories like intermittent explosive disorder), the ambivalent quality of the American view of anger is apparent. These widely differing American cultural practices offer individuals varied opportunities to engage in expressing, channeling, harnessing, directing, and controlling anger.

Tibetans, by contrast, possess a conceptually rich and elaborate tradition of Buddhist ideas and ethical practices—such as the mind-training (blo sbyong) tradition—and a set of cultural institutions and rituals dedicated to the goal of eliminating or transforming lung lang. Heavy metal and gangster rap have not caught on with Tibetan settlement youths, among whom performers like the Backstreet Boys and Bryan Adams represent the transgressive edge of global youth culture impingements. Conceptual resources and social practices in Tibetan exile society reflect an unequivocal moral condemnation of anger/lung lang and related sentiments. Particularly through the institutional structures and practices of Buddhist monasticism, resources in Tibetan exile society are dedicated to transforming, calming, preventing, and extinguishing lung lang, rather than channeling, cultivating, harnessing, expressing and directing it effectively.

Component 8: Social Management

Consistent with the normative ethical rejection of anger in Tibetan culture, during incidents in which anger/lung lang was openly expressed and witnesses were present, Tibetan bystanders were more likely to show disapproval of open displays of anger than were American bystanders.

These comparisons have been extended with ethnographic and ethnolinguistic data (see Horton, 2006). We believe that they illustrate the value of adopting a componential, symbolic/interpretive model of emotions when one is seeking to compare emotional experiences across cultural groups.

BITE YOUR TONGUE: THE CASE OF HINDU LAJJA

When emotions are analyzed in terms of their constituent components, the issue of translation equivalence for mental states becomes a matter of pattern matching. One tries to determine whether the variables in each of those component slots are linked in similar ways across cultures. One benefit of this approach is that it makes it possible to elucidate the way the abstract conceptual or definitional core of any particular emotion takes on a culture-specific character in different historical traditions and is associated with a somewhat different set of mental states across cultural groups. Consider, for example, the contemporary Hindu conception of lajja (or lajya), which has
been explicated for two communities in South Asia: the Newars of Bhaktapur in Nepal (Parish, 1991), and the Oriyas of Bhubaneswar in Orissa, India (Menon & Shweder, 1994, 1998; Shweder, 2004). Lajja is often translated by bilingual informants and dictionaries as though it were equivalent in meaning to the English word “shame”; it is also sometimes translated as though it meant the same thing as the American English words “embarrassment,” “shyness,” “modesty,” or “coyness.” Yet, as should become obvious from the following bit of cultural exegesis, the translation of the meaning of mental states across languages and cultures is a far more subtle and hazardous process than many suppose.

For starters, somewhat unlike the meaning of “shame” current in contemporary Anglo-American circles, lajjia is something one deliberately shows or puts on display the way we might show our “gratitude,” “loyalty,” or “respect.” It is a state of consciousness that has been elevated in South Asia as a supreme virtue, especially for women, and it is routinely exhibited in everyday life—for example, every time a woman covers her face or ducks out of a room to avoid direct affiliation with those members of her family she is supposed to avoid. Parish (1991, p. 324) describes it as an emotion and a moral state. It is by means of their lajja that those who are civilized uphold the social order by showing perseverance in the pursuit of their own social role obligations; by displaying respect for the hierarchical arrangement of social privileges and responsibilities; by acting shy, modest, or deferential and not encroaching on the prerogatives of others; or by covering one’s face, remaining silent, or lowering one’s eyes in the presence of superiors. Like gratitude, loyalty, or respect, lajja (which is a way of showing one’s civility and commitment to the maintenance of social harmony through displays of respectful restraint) is judged in South Asia to be a very good thing.

While lajjia may be experienced by both men and women, it is an emotion and a virtue associated with a certain feminine ideal. It is talked about as a lovely ornament worn by women. Lajja is the linguistic stem for the name of a local creeper plant (a “touch-me-not”), which is so demure that upon the slightest contact it closes its petals and withdraws into itself. To say of a woman that she is full of lajja is a very positive recommendation. Here is one reason why.

Perhaps the most important collective representation of lajja in various regions of eastern India is the Tantric icon portraying the mother goddess Kali, brandishing weapons and a decapitated head in her 10 arms, eyes bulging and tongue out, with her foot stepping on the chest of her husband, the god Siva, who is lying on the ground beneath her. Based on interviews with 92 informants in Orissa, India, Menon and Shweder (1994, 1998, 2003) have examined the meaning of this icon and its significance for our understanding of lajja.

The gist of the story, as it is narrated by local experts, is that once upon a time the male gods gave a boon to a minor demon, Mahisasura, to the effect that he could only be killed at the hands of a naked female. They thereby turned Mahisasura into a major demon capable of terrorizing all the male gods. In order to destroy the demon, the male gods pooled all their energy and powers to create the goddess Durga and arm her with their own weapons. On their behalf, they sent Durga into battle against Mahisasura, but they neglected to tell her about the boon. She fought bravely, but could not kill the demon; he was too strong and clever. In desperation, Durga appealed for guidance from an auspicious goddess, who let her in on the secret. As one informant narrated the story:

So Durga did as she was advised to [she stripped], and within seconds after Mahisasura saw her [naked], his strength waned and he died under her sword. After killing him a terrible rage entered Durga’s mind, and she asked herself, “What kinds of gods are these that give to demons such boons, and apart from that what kind of gods are these that they do not have the honesty to tell me the truth before sending me into battle?”

Durga felt humiliated by her nakedness and by the deceit. She decided that such a world with such gods did not deserve to survive; she took on the form of Kali and went on a mad rampage, devouring every living creature that came in her way. The gods then called on Siva, Kali’s husband, to do something to save the world from destruction at the hands of the mother goddess. Siva lay in her path as she came tramping along, enraged. Absorbed in her wild dance of destruction, Kali accidentally stepped on Siva and placed her foot on her husband’s chest, an unspeakable act of disrespect. When she looked down and saw what she had
done she came back to her senses—in particular to her sense of lajja, which she expressed by biting her tongue between her teeth. She reined in her anger and became calm and still. To this day in Orissa, India, “Bite your tongue” is an idiomatic expression for lajja, and the biting of the tongue is the facial expression used by women as an iconic apology when they realize or are confronted with the fact that they have failed to uphold social norms.

One moral of the story is that men are incapable of running the world by themselves, even though they are socially dominant. They rely on women to make the world go ’round. Yet in a patriarchal society, men humiliate women by the way they exploit female power, strength, and perseverance. This leads to anger or rage in women, which is highly destructive of everything of value and must be brought under control for the sake of the social order. Lajja is a salient ideal in South Asia, because it preserves social harmony by helping women to swallow their rage.

If we decompose lajja into its component domains, it becomes apparent just how hazardous it can be to assume that one can render the emotional meanings of others with terms from our received English lexicon for mental states. One is reminded here of Geertz’s discussion (1984, p. 130) of the difficulties of translating the Balinese term lek. Balinese lek seems much like Hindu lajja. Geertz notes that lek has been variably translated and mistranslated, and that “shame” is the most common attempt. He tries to render it as “stage fright.” Hindu lajja does not map well onto words like “shame,” “embarrassment,” “shyness,” “modesty,” or even “stage fright.” An analysis of the constituents of lajja helps us see why.

The normative social appraisal of lajja, for example, is quite positive. To be full of lajja is to possess the virtue of behaving in a civilized manner and in such a way that the social order and its norms are upheld. It is not a neurosis, and it does not conote a reduction in the strength of the ego. Indeed, lajja promotes self-esteem. To experience lajja is to experience that sense of graceful submission and virtuous, courteous, well-mannered self-control that led Kali to rein in her rage. One might try to render its meaning as “respectful restraint.”

The environmental determinants of lajja as a sense of one’s own virtue and civility are as varied as the set of actions that are dutiful and responsible, given one’s station in life in a world in which all people are highly self-conscious about their social designation (see Geertz, 1984, for a brilliant attempt to capture the dramatic qualities of such a world). They include events that we would find familiar (not being seen naked by the wrong person in the wrong context), as well as many events that might seem alien or strange (never talking directly to one’s husband’s elder brother or to one’s father-in-law; never being in the same room with both one’s husband and another male to whom one must defer).

In terms of self-management strategies, South Asian lajja may appear at first glance to be similar to American shame or embarrassment. It activates a habit or routine that sometimes results in hiding, covering up, and withdrawing from the scene. Yet what is really being activated by lajja is a general habit of respect for social hierarchy and a consciousness of one’s social and public responsibilities, which in the context of South Asian norms may call for avoidance, silence, withdrawal, or other deferential, protective, or nonaggressive gestures and actions.

Finally, consider the semantic structure of the American English word “shame” and the Indian Oriya word lajja in the minds of particular informants. When middle-class Anglo-American college students are presented with the triad of terms “shame—happiness—anger” and asked, “Which is most different from the other two?”, they are most likely to respond that either “happiness” or “shame” is most different from the other two, perhaps on the hedonic grounds that “shame” and “anger” go together (in contrast to “happiness”) because they are both unpleasant feelings, or that “happiness” and “anger” go together (in contrast to “shame”) because they are both ego-expanding emotions. Neither response is typical of responses in the South Asian community where Menon and Shweder (1994) have worked, where lajja (shame?) and suka (happiness?) are thought to go together in the triad test, and raga (anger?), perceived Tibetan-like as destructive of society, is viewed as the odd emotion out. Here something seems to be amiss in the translation process. Something may well have been amiss in most past attempts to equate emotions across languages and across local cultural worlds (see Lutz, 1985, 1988; Lutz and White, 1986; Rosaldo, 1984; Wierzbicka, 1990, 1992, 1997).
THE SOCIAL AND MORAL CONTEXT OF EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

The cases of lung lang and laja illustrate the dependence of emotional experience on its social and moral context. To understand laja, for example, one must understand the moral goods that Oriyas strive to achieve. This strategy of viewing emotions against the background of their associated moral goods can be extended to other emotions by using a framework that has proved useful in cultural psychological work. Shweder et al. (1997; see also Shweder, 1990b; Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt et al., 1993; Jensen, 1995, 1998, 2005) suggest that moral goods do not vary randomly from culture to culture, but rather tend to cluster into three sets of related goods or three ethics, known as the ethics of “autonomy,” the ethics of “community,” and the ethics of “divinity.” Cultures rely upon the three ethics to varying degrees. The relative weights of the three ethics within a culture appear to affect the experience and expression of emotion, as well as the way emotions are conceptualized by both local folk and local experts.

In cultures that emphasize an ethic of autonomy, the central object of value is the individual conceptualized as a preference structure. Within that type of cultural world, the most salient moral goods are those that promote the autonomy, freedom, and well-being of the individual, with the result that nothing can be condemned that does not demonstrably harm others, restrict their freedom, or impinge on their rights. Haidt et al. (1993), for example, found that American college students (a population steeped in the ethics of autonomy) responded to stories about violations of food and sexual taboos (e.g., eating one’s already dead pet dog) with disgust. Nevertheless, these students felt compelled by the logic of their ethical stance to separate their feelings of disgust from their moral judgments. As a result, they held firmly to the view that their personal emotional reactions did not imply that the actions were wrong. They spoke exclusively in the language of the ethics of autonomy, pointing out that nobody was hurt, and that the people involved had a right to do as they pleased in a private setting. Disgust plays an ambiguous role in such an autonomy-based cultural world (see Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, Chapter 47, this volume). In such a world, the moral domain is limited to issues of harm, rights, and justice (Turiel, 1983), and the emotions that are experienced as moral emotions (e.g., anger, sympathy, and guilt) are those that respond to a rather narrow class of ethical goods (e.g., justice, freedom, and the avoidance of harm). In such a world, the focus of ordinary folk and social scientists alike is upon individuals’ striving to maximize their personal utility (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Plutchik, 1980; Stein, Hernandez, & Trabasso, Chapter 35, this volume). Happiness, sadness, pride, and shame are viewed as responses to individual gains and losses, successes and failures. Other moral goods (such as loyalty, duty, and respect for status) that might be linked to the emotions are either lost or undertheorized.

Nevertheless, in many parts of the world the moral domain has been constructed in such a way that it is broader than, or at least different from, an ethic of autonomy. In cultures that emphasize an ethic of community, ontological priority is given to collective entities (the family, guild, clan, community, corporation, or nation), and the central moral goods are those that protect these entities against challenges from without and decay from within (e.g., goods such as loyalty, duty, honor, respectfulness, chastity, modesty, and self-control). In such a world, individual choices (what to wear, whom to marry, how to address others) take on a moral significance (Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987), and the successful pursuit of individual goals may even be a cause for embarrassment or shame. Haidt et al. (1993), for example, found that outside of college samples, people of lower socioeconomic status generally thought it was morally wrong to eat one’s already dead pet dog or to clean one’s toilet with the national flag. Even when these actions were judged to be harmless, they were still seen as objectively disgusting or disrespectful and hence as morally wrong. In a cultural world based on an ethics of community, emotions may exist that are not fully felt by those whose morality is based on an ethics of autonomy. Laja is a clear example, since it is not the type of emotion that will be experienced in a world that sees hierarchy and the exclusive prerogatives of others as unjust or as a form of oppression, rather than as a powerful and legitimate object of admiration and/or respect (Menon & Shweder, 1998).

Similarly, emotions related to honor and heroism may require a strong attachment and dedication to a collectivity or group, for whom
the hero lays down his or her life. The Nāyīṣāṇāstra’s otherwise puzzling inclusion of perseverance or heroism as a basic emotion, equal to anger and fear, seems more intelligible against the backdrop of the ethics of community. A James Bond-type hero may display perseverance as he battles to save the “free world,” yet we do not think he inspires the same emotional experience in an American audience that an Indian audience savors when a Hindi film hero battles to avenge the death of his father. Many older classic American films raised themes of family honor, but such themes have become less common in recent decades, as the ethics of autonomy has pushed back the ethics of community. Unlike Hindi films, modern American films rarely embed the hero in the thick traditions and obligations of family history. It is a rare movie indeed when we meet the hero’s parents.

The third ethic, the ethic of divinity, may have a similar differential activation and enabling effect on emotional life. In the ethic of divinity, people (and sometimes animals) are seen as containing a bit of God (or a god) within them, and the central moral goods are those that protect and dignify the person’s inherent divinity. The body is experienced as a temple, so matters that seem to be personal choices within the ethics of autonomy (e.g., food and sexual choices, personal hygiene) become moral and spiritual issues associated with such goods as sanctity, purity, and pollution. Given such an ethic, cleanliness is indeed next to godliness.

Within the terms of a cultural world focused on an ethic of divinity, even love and hate may lose their simple positive versus negative hedonic valences. A modern spiritual guide for Hindus (Yatiswarananda, 1979, p. 187) says that hatred and attachment are both fetters that “degrade the human being, preventing him from rising to his true stature. Both must be renounced.” Hindu scriptures contain many stories about people who come to feel disgust at their own greedy and carnal attachments. This disgust helps them to renounce their attachments, and the renunciation floods them with a positive feeling. Of course, the very idea of an emotion connected with renunciation seems paradoxical, since spiritual progress in many Eastern religions is measured by the degree to which one moves beyond the experience of emotions. Only once this paradox is grasped does the mysterious ninth emotion of the Nāyīṣāṇāstra—serenity—begin to make sense, along with its otherwise puzzling textual association with disgust. Serenity or calmness is an important part of Hindu emotional life and emotional discourse precisely because of the centrality of an ethics of divinity in everyday Hindu life. Not surprisingly, it is on no Western lists of basic emotions.

THE MORAL CONTEXT OF EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ISLAMIC THOUGHT

Emotions can be moralized in various ways. One can formulate rules for the experiencing or expression of an emotion; one can make them the subject of obligations; one can frame their ethical significance in terms of their consequences; and so on. But perhaps the most powerful and pervasive way of moralizing emotions is by linking them with virtues—morally good traits or states of character.

The classic Western statement of the relationship between emotions and virtues is Aristotle’s formulation:

... fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. (Nicomachean Ethics, 1106b)

For Aristotle, emotions are not morally significant per se, but rather with respect to their alignment with ethical imperatives indexed by such phrases as “the right times,” “the right objects,” and so on. Virtue consists in large part of being “properly affected,” which is a product of moral training and habituation.1

The great moral and religious traditions have been especially concerned with the moral significance of emotions. Here we briefly examine Islam’s long-standing “hypercognition” (Levy, 1984) of the virtues and highly elaborated concern with the development of character, which is still very much alive and kept in the mainstream of everyday Islamic discourse through the foundational texts of the religion (the Qur’an and the hadith, or sayings of the Prophet), as well as through the many contemporary popular works of devotional literature that deal with ethics.2
An understanding of Islamic morality might usefully begin with the concept of akhlāq. For the vast majority of Muslims, morality or ethics is simply akhlāq, and akhlāq is almost universally the translation offered by Muslims for both “morality” and “ethics.” This is significant for a study of virtue concepts in Islam because of the etymology of akhlāq and its related words. Akhlāq comes from the Arabic root *kh-l-q*, which means “to create, shape, make, form, or mold.” Akhlāq is the plural form of *khulq*, which denotes “an innate peculiarity, natural disposition, character, or nature.” The Arabic translation of “ethics” in the sense of a philosophical discipline is *‘ilm al-akhlāq*, or “science of akhlāq.” Thus, while there are several Arabic words that translate “morality,” the predominant one reflects an identification of morality and ethics with human nature as authored or divinely created with a specific *telos*, function, end, or purpose in mind that is definitive of the full realization of one’s nature.

Since the time of Muhammad, Muslims have seen Islam as being, in some significant measure, a means for the transformation of emotional life from one of ignorance and backwardness to one appropriate to a divinely created nature. This theme has been elaborated throughout Islamic history by some of its greatest philosophers, some of whom even adopted Aristotelian ways of thinking about emotion and virtue. For example, the great Muslim philosopher al-Ghazali offered a typology of the virtues organized around three cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, and temperance (Sherif, 1975). Table 25.1 shows al-Ghazali’s typology. The translations of some of al-Ghazali’s terms may seem somewhat stilted, being literal translations without the nuance that comes with context. But one thing that is immediately striking is how many of the virtues listed here are directly concerned with emotional states and their management (we have put them in *bold* type). This is especially the case with the category connected with “temperance,” which is perhaps not surprising, since temperance in general connotes moderation.

al-Ghazali was also a Sufi—a Muslim mystic—and thus was especially concerned with the fusion of the mind and the soul, and with the practices through which perfect gnostic communion with God could be achieved. Naturally, one of the aspects of the self that must be worked on in pursuit of this goal is emotional experience, and elsewhere in his work al-Ghazali elaborates on the need for “disciplining the heart,” “breaking desires,” and “cultivating the emotions.”

There are some surprising, or at least counterintuitive, aspects of al-Ghazali’s system. For example, it is probably not obvious (at least to contemporary Western readers) why “gentleness” would be classified under “courage,” or why “righteous indignation” would be listed as a form of “temperance.” For contemporary American English speakers, “courage” seems to be about the management of fear in the service of (reasonable) action, and indignation hardly seems to be a temperate emotion—though perhaps “righteous” is meant to indicate the right and just kind of moderation re-

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Note. Virtues directly related to emotional states and their management are given in *bold*.
quired. But this initial opacity is itself an illustration of the entanglement of moral concepts with emotion concepts. Part of the explanation of the classification of gentleness (as courage) and righteous indignation (as temperance) is Islam’s conception of itself as a divinely given means for reforming what the early followers of Muhammad perceived to be the immoral, undisciplined ways of the pre-Islamic Bedouin. It becomes easier to promote the virtue of gentleness if it can be persuasively classified as a form of courage.

al-Ghazali’s table of the virtues is only one instance of a widespread preoccupation with virtue ethics among Muslim philosophers. Miskawayh, for example, in his treatise Tabdhib wal-Akhlq, offered a somewhat different classification, while other authors contributed in-depth analyses of specific virtues, such as patience (sabr) and gratitude (shukr) (Miskawayh, 1968). One might well wonder whether these medieval theories have any relevance for the moral thinking and emotion concepts of contemporary Muslims. Joseph (2001) studied the semantic organization of the virtue concepts of contemporary Arab Muslims living in the Bridgeview suburbs of Chicago. Using free-listing and similarity-sorting tasks and hierarchical cluster analysis, he found an intuitively available typology of the virtues in which, again, the emotions play a prominent role. The study discovered seven clusters of virtue concepts, which are listed below with their constituents. Concepts that seem clearly related to emotion are underlined.

Intellectual: wisdom and reason
Patience: optimism and patience
Self-control: strength, self-control, modesty, cleanliness, courage
Forbearance: humility, respect, gentleness, tolerance, forbearance, forgivingness
Attitudes toward others: good neighbor, love of others, good relations with kin, compassion
Altruistic: generosity, helping others, doing good works, sacrifice, gratitude
“Religious” virtues: sincerity, fidelity, truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, tagwa³

As with al-Ghazali’s philosophical classification of the virtues, the latent or implicit typology revealed here reinforces the observation that many emotion concepts, and the components of them described above, are deeply teleological: they reveal the goals or ends toward which human beings are meant to strive by virtue of their supposed divinely authored nature, and at the same time identify defects and excesses that must be corrected if their teloi are to be achieved. As our discussion of emotion concepts like lajja and lung lang has suggested, components such as environmental determinants, appraisals of significance, self-management, social management, and communication are significantly constituted by normative ideals and concrete strategies for aligning emotional experience with ethical constraints.

Virtues, of course, are not themselves emotions. Rather, they constitute one powerful normative language for articulating and thinking about the ethical and moral dimensions of emotional experience.

CONCLUSION: THE CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY OF THE EMOTIONS RENEWED

As we enter a new era of collaborative research among anthropologists, psychologists, linguists, philosophers, and biologists concerned with similarities and differences in emotional functioning on a worldwide scale, a major goal for the cultural psychology of the emotions will be to decompose the emotions (and the languages of the emotions) into multiple components for the sake of comparative understanding. We hope that by means of this decomposition of the emotions’ symbolic structure (and the recognition of the connection between local moral worlds and the social construction of emotional experience), it will be possible to render the meaning of other people’s mental states without assimilating them in misleading ways to an a priori set of lexical items available in the language of the researchers. In connection with this chapter, we hope the reader will have become somewhat more alert to all that is potentially lost or misleadingly accrued in the process of translation—as, for example, when Hindu lajja is rendered as American “shame,” or Tibetan lung lang as American “anger.”

It is one of the great marvels of life that across languages, cultures, and history, it is possible, with sufficient knowledge, effort, and insight, to truly understand the meanings of other people’s emotions and mental states.
one must also marvel at one of the great ironies of life—namely, that the process of understanding the consciousness of others can perceptively appear to be far easier than it really is, thereby making it even more difficult to achieve a genuine understanding of “difference.” Thus, in the end, this chapter is really a plea for a decomposi-
tion of emotional states into their multiple components of cultural meaning (from normative social appraisals to somatic and affective experience and more) and the application of those components of meaning in comparative research. Unless we take that step, we will con-
tinue to be prone to the bias that the emotional life of human beings is “basically” the same around the world. The truth may well be that when it comes to “basic emotions,” we (medieval Hindus and contemporary secular Anglo-
-Americans, Tibetan Buddhists living in India and Arab Muslims living in Chicago, aboriginal Pintupis and indigenous Russians, migratory Inuit and settled Balinese) are not only basically alike in many ways, but are also basically different from each other in many signifi-
cant ways as well.

NOTES

1. For general discussions of Aristotle’s views of emotions and virtues, see, for example, Kosman (1980) and Roberts (1989).
2. For some classical and modern treatments of the Islamic concept of ashklaq and of the role of the virtues in morality, see, for example, Busool (1998), Lemu (1997), and Sherif (1975).
3. Taqwa is a difficult-to-translate term that roughly means “God-consciousness” and serves for many as the ultimate virtue—the one to which all the others are means.

REFERENCES


