

NATURE METAPHORS FOR EMOTIONS IN MAORI CONFRONTED WITH OTHER LANGUAGES*

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The employment of natural elements in metaphorizing feelings does not have only an ornamental function. Rather we are confronted here with a parallelism the role of which seems to lie in emphasizing the spontaneity of the feelings and their experiencers' helplessness toward them. Upon the grammatical level it is the dative that corresponds to this function more than any other nominal case.

Our cognitive approach to reality is often characterized as anthropomorphic and anthropocentric. The latter characteristic is undoubtedly true and we view ourselves as the fictitious or pragmatic centre of the milieu in which we are acting. Viewed diachronically, all cognitive probes dispatched by our minds into either closer or farther surroundings generally tend to employ and lean on knowledge acquired in the vicinity of subsequent interpretation of more distant phenomena. This, however, holds only relatively; our cognitive centre does not coincide with the geometrical centre of our body. This innermost inside of our being is far from readily accessible not only to the naive mind but also to modern medicine.

As mentioned above, human knowledge is shaped not only by anthropocentrism but also by anthropomorphism. We accumulate information through interacting with practice and this interaction inevitably takes place where we come into immediate contact with our surroundings, in a kind of interface between the cognizing human being and the cognized world. In other words, phenomena located along the thus comprehended interface are more familiar to us than anything outside it and this is where many cognitive patterns are taken when trying to grasp more distant terrains. However, *terrae incognitae* exist not only somewhere in a distance but also deep in ourselves – as witnessed by language, our inside is one of those realms of which the naive human mind had had only a very vague understanding. Traces of the activity of the archaic mind are abundantly present in both grammatical categories and in lexical semantics.

One of those realms that comprise phenomena not perceivable by our senses is our mind and in particular our emotions, psychic and mental states, etc. What

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could the naive philosopher of language do when he felt the need to describe what is going on in his heart (or mind)? He could only observe the effects of the mental states (Kövecses 1986: 12) but also some actions resulting directly or indirectly from these states. He reached out and tried to find some perceivable parallels in his surroundings. And there are phenomena that are reminiscent of mental processes and states through their dynamism, mobility, energy, etc. It is the natural elements and atmospheric phenomena such as wind, atmosphere in general, water, especially sea or stream, fire, light and darkness. In addition to what has been said above, they share another feature with our emotions – they are or at least seem to be highly spontaneous, that is, independent of our will. Most of these phenomena were inherent in the religious beliefs and myths of the Maori (just as in those of so many other peoples) and have become part and parcel of commonsense knowledge. In traditional poetry especially, parallels between the state of the human mind on the one hand and atmospheric phenomena on the other are quite common. The human being lives in harmony with nature. Therefore it comes as no surprise that metaphors of darkness and night often have sorrowful, cheerless and pitiful connotations while those of day and light tend to be associated with a cheerful and bright mood. The evening is the time when people begin to remember their sorrows (Orbell 1985) and thus the contrast of dark night and daylight could serve to model human moods fluctuating between joy and anguish.

The regular alternation of daylight and night darkness could provoke acute awareness of the presence of life and death. However, overcast or foggy sky could also be associated with negative moods such as sorrow. A spiritual quality might be ascribed to the movements of air that could be both strong or slow.

The Maori word for wind *hau* also delivers the meaning described as “breath” or the “vitality principle”. “A light breeze might indicate the presence of a spirit; and a person pining for an absent lover or relative would yearn for a wind from the direction in which he was living, feeling that this would establish a kind of contact between them” (Orbell 1985: 74–75).

A list of selected lexical metaphors used to symbolize mental states or phenomena in Maori follows:

ATMOSPHERE (WIND)

– *aawangawanga*

/awanga SW wind/
uneasy in mind, disturbed,
undecided, distress

WATER: SEA and WIND

+ *huene*

swell of the sea
to desire

WATER IN VARIOUS FORMS

– *huka*

foam, froth, frost, snow, cold
trouble, agitation

CHEMICAL PROCESS IN COOKING

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| – <i>ii</i> | to ferment, turn sour to be stirred (of the feelings) |
| WATER and WIND + <i>kare</i> | ripple; lash of a whip object of passionate affection to long for, desire ardently |
| WATER and WIND – <i>kakare</i> | agitated, stirred, emotion, agitation |
| WATER and WIND ? – <i>komingo</i> | to swirl, eddy to be disturbed, be in a whirl, agitate |
| WIND – <i>koohengi(hengi)</i> | breeze, light wind yearning, feeling (for absent friends) |
| WATER – <i>koomingomingo</i> | whirlpool to be violently agitated |
| ATMOSPHERE and WATER – <i>koorehu</i> | haze, mist, fog regret, disappointment |
| WIND – <i>kootonga</i> | cold south wind misery |
| WATER and WIND ? – <i>maapuna</i> | to well up, ripple, sway, undulate, form a pool to grieve, sigh |
| WIND + <i>mumu</i> | baffling, boisterous wind valiant warrior |

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| WIND – <i>muri</i> | breeze to sigh, grieve |
| FIRE + <i>nawe</i> | to be set on fire to be kindled or excited (feelings) |
| FIRE – <i>paahunu</i> | fire, to burn anxiety, apprehension |
| FIRE and AIR – <i>paoa</i> | smoke, gall bitterness (e.g. <i>Tupu te paoa ki tona ngakau</i>) |
| AIR ? – <i>pari kaarangaranga</i> | echoing cliff, echo uncertain, deceptive talk |
| ATMOSPHERE – <i>whakapoo</i> | to darken to grieve |
| FIRE – <i>poko</i> | to go out, be extinguished to be beaten, defeated |
| ATMOSPHERE – <i>pouri</i> | dark sorrowful, sad, distressed |
| SKY – CELESTIAL BODY – <i>roku</i> | to wane (of the moon) to grow weak, decline |
| SEA and WIND ? – <i>taahurihuri</i> | to rock (as a canoe at sea) to be perturbed, be at a loss |
| SEA (INHERENT MOVEMENT) – <i>tai</i> | sea anger, rage, violence |

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| WIND – <i>tarakaka</i> | southwestern wind fierce, boisterous |
| SEA (INHERENT MOVEMENT) – <i>taawhati</i> | to ebb to die |
| FIRE – <i>tore</i> | to burn to be erect, inflamed |
| SEA and WIND – <i>toretore</i> | rough sea rough, bad, unpleasant |
| SEA and WIND – <i>tuarangaranga</i> | rough, boisterous (of sea), broken, rough (of country) unsettled, perplexed |

Even where the transfer is routed into a sphere other than the psychical (for example, vital function: to die; to grow weak; or social sphere: valiant warrior; misery), there is always an emotional (modal) evaluation present.

We might ask why are most of these metaphors emotionally negative. Perhaps this is due to the fact that negative emotions and conditions tend to be concealed or at least disguised with the aim of somehow rendering them more tolerable. Above, negative attitude has been marked /-/ and positive /+/.

The elements operate either singly or in combinations. The salient qualities of the elements are: mobility, unpredictability, obscurity of the source of their movements, changeability. Both air and water are inherently mobile but their combination may boost this property of theirs. Changes in the intensity of light are likewise salient (implying the contrast of day and night but also that of clear or overcast sky), just as well the heat of fire and especially its destructive effect.

The description of human feelings and moods via nature metaphors has also an interesting hidden aspect that rises to the surface when it comes to evaluating them. This aspect is their spontaneity and involuntariness. As a consequence, people are considered not (entirely) responsible for the manifestation of their feelings or even for their consequences. There are languages in which the independence of emotions and moods upon the will of the person involved has infiltrated the grammatical structure. The experiencer of the feelings may be placed in an oblique case, usually in the dative aptly characterized as a both “objective and subjective case” (Filin 1979: 65), as in Slavic languages, cf. Slovak *Protiví sa mi* “I feel disgusted”, *Páči sa mi* “I like”, Russian *Mne ne chočetsa* “I do not feel like...”, *Mne skučno* “I am sad”, German *Es gefällt mir* “I like it”. On the

other hand, the widespread use of the English nominative in these situations seems to underline the experiencer's responsibility even for his emotional motions. However, there is yet another possibility, namely, when a particular feeling is viewed as something objectively existing, cf. Hawaiian *pono* "fair, necessary, should, ought, must" (Pukui – Elbert 1957: 314) or Japanese predicates of the type *kowai* "is dreadful", *kirai* "dislike, distaste". Perhaps we could set up a scale at the one end of which we should place entirely non-individualized constructions like Japanese *Kowai* "It is awful" (as an equivalent of "I am afraid" or "You are afraid", etc.), or Polynesian *He pono* "It is right" (equivalent of "One should"), followed by generally or indefinitely non-individualized constructions like Russian *Nado* "Is necessary", *Možno* "Is possible" and Slovak *Treba*, *Možno* that can be individualized via dative (while remaining of involuntary nature), cf. Russian *Mne nado* "Is necessary to me", Slovak *Treba mi* "Is necessary to me", further by obligatorily individualized involuntary constructions like Slovak *Mne sa protiví* "To me is disgusting" or German *Es gefällt mir* and closed at the opposite end by fully individualized constructions of voluntary nature as in English *I like it*, *I hate it*, etc.

It is tempting to correlate this sequence with the advancing individualization upon the mental level observed diachronically within the Slavic subfamily (cf. Russian and Slovak) or within the Germanic subfamily (cf. German and English).

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