



Tuesday, June 24th, 14:00-14:30, room 101

Hubert **Kowalewski**

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin

On forces and things. Metaphors of emotions in Buddhism

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Emotions are concepts which are frequently, if not typically, understood through metaphors. According to the theory of conceptual metaphors proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), a metaphor is not merely a linguistic device used in poetry and rhetorics, but a conceptual phenomenon of understanding one concept in terms of another concept. This presentation compares similarities and differences between the ways in which emotions are metaphorized in Western and Buddhist cultures. While the similarities can be traced back to universal cognitive capacities of the human mind (embodiment of metaphorical system and objectification), the differences reflect culture-specific assumptions about the nature of human emotions and the about the ways in which emotions, especially the negative ones, should be handled. The presentation focuses on metaphorical expressions of emotion concepts 'anger' and 'sadness' in a collection of the earliest Buddhist texts titled *The Pali Canon*.

In Western culture metaphors of emotions are used primarily to explain the influence of emotions on the general psychological state or behavior of the experiencer. For this reason, the key "master metaphor" found in Western culture is EMOTION IS FORCE (cf. Kövecses 2000), built upon the basic force schema (cf. Talmy 1988). In the prototypical scenario, the force schema features two entities: the agonist and the antagonist. The antagonist exerts some sort of influence on the agonist and, depending on the force balance between these entities, may be able to change the state of the agonist. In the Buddhism the metaphor EMOTION IS FORCE can be found as well, but another "master metaphor" is equally important, namely EMOTION IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT. In the prototypical scenario evoked by the latter metaphor, an emotion is constructed as a concrete thing that can be eliminated (through destruction, removal, or separation from another thing). The differences in these two approaches towards emotions are largely motivated by culture-specific beliefs about human psychology and spiritual practices aimed at overcoming negative emotional states.

References

1. Kövecses, Zoltán (2000) *Metaphor and Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
3. Talmy, Leonard (1988) "Force dynamics in language and cognition." *Cognitive Science* 12.