



# Understanding & Translating the heart & the soul

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CHAPTER NUMBER XXXXX  
UNDERSTANDING AND TRANSLATING  
THE HEART & THE SOUL  
JAMES W. UNDERHILL

### **Abstract Blurp**

This paper will focus on two rival synonyms, the heart and the soul in various languages, but focusing on English, Czech, French and German, in order to understand what they mean and the values they engender. Is the soul a value in itself or the property of other ideals? How does the heart contain or relate to other virtues? Is the heart good in and of itself? This would appear to be the case, if we consider ‘heartless’, and the gift of the heart to men by God. But even at the beginning of Genesis, the heart of men is said to be “evil”. The heart and the soul, are complex in themselves, they follow tortuous paths, and translating them will take us on intriguing but surprising, even upsetting adventures.

### **Bio**

James W. Underhill was born in Glasgow in 1967. He is Full Professor and lectures on Literature, Poetics, and Translation at Rouen University in Northern France. He has worked as a full-time translator of French and Czech, and published poems in translation from French and German. Underhill's work on worldview and language focuses on both linguistic constraints at a deeper level, and the essential creative impulse by which individuals stimulate the shared language of the community. He is the author of *Humboldt, Worldview, and Language* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), *Creating Worldviews: Ideology, Metaphor and Language* (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), *Ethnolinguistics and Cultural Concepts: Truth, Love, Hate and War* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), and *Voice and Versification in Translating Poems* (Ottawa University Press, 2017).

### **Introduction**

Are ‘heart’ and ‘soul’ values? Is the heart good? Is the soul of vital importance to man? In religion and in everyday life, in music, in films and in literature – judging from conversations and everyday speech – it would seem that these two concepts are essential, and essentially good. Anything that harms the soul or the heart, harms the person at the deepest possible level. To strike someone at the heart, it to attack his or her physical, psychic, moral and emotional self. To harm someone’s soul, not only hurts them, but deregulates their capacity to live full lives. If something is soul-destroying, it perturbs our ability to function and distorts the way we perceive the harmony and order of the world around us. Heartless and soul-dead people are not considered to be able to feel in a harmonious wholesome manner. Their vision and understanding of the individuals that people their world is deregulated and deeply distorted. If this is true, then the soul-dead person cannot fully know the world. In this sense, the heart and soul should not so much be considered as values in themselves, but as faculties that enable us to value what is good. The heart and soul according to this view constitute the affective, social, emotional, and spiritual capacities or sensibilities that enable us to know the world.

Curiously, in marketing, in the promotion of sports, and in self-help literature, and in the widespread medical advice found in magazines, and in everyday discussion, the heart is regularly reduced to an organ; the heart is a “motor” or a “pump”. Indeed, it is a universal truth that the heart IS an organ. For this reason, translating cardio and cardio training or cardiology into various languages – into Russian, Slovak, Czech, Spanish, French and German and so on – proves fairly straight-forward. But does this cover all the meanings we attribute to the heart?

And is it not true that this “motor” that “keeps the machine running”, this pump that regulates the blood and brings the necessary nutrients to the cells of all living breathing organisms, proves more complicated on further consideration. Indeed, this restrained or reductive physiological definition forces us to consider whether we can distinguish between humans and animals; it forces us to ask ourselves what we mean when we say someone is “heartless” or “soulless”, words that usually evoke much more than a simple statement about whether someone is living or dead in a medical biological sense. So, what do we mean by the soul? What values do we invest in the heart or associate with it? These are the axiological questions that will be discussed and explored as we move between the worldviews that languages open up for us. Although these are fundamental and perhaps universal questions regarding how we relate to each other and to the world, these questions certainly appear to be formulated in different ways in different times when we enter into dialogue and study the discourse of specific languages.

### **Ethnolinguistic Methodology**

The approach I invented for this study was a hybrid synthetic and analytic approach that involved combining:

- the traditional philological study of philosophical, literary, and medical texts and translations selected for an ongoing series of papers focusing on the way we conceptualize the heart and the soul in English and other languages
- research and analysis using the leading online electronic corpora (Leipzig Wortschatz, COCA, BNC, Frantext and so on)
- the use of my own more restrained personal electronic corpora for English, Scottish, American and French texts ranging from one to three million words in length
- watching films in various languages (French, German, Czech, Russian, Spanish & English)
- listening to songs, and watching youtube videos for songs in various languages
- recording short film interviews primarily with French- and English-speakers (but also the speakers of other languages) concerning how the interviewees conceive of and understand the idea of ‘the heart’.
- organizing the *Rouen Ethnolinguistics Project* international conference, *Hearts, Homelands & Heartlands* in Rouen, France, 6-12 June 2018 with on-line accessible papers on how we conceptualize the heart in English, Welsh Gaelic, French, Basque, Spanish, Polish, German, and Flemish.

### **Concepts, Values, Gender & Paradoxes**

The idea of the body as a machine, and the heart as a pump or motor, is one that has become widespread over that past two hundred years. Although William Harvey (1578-1657) was making an earthshattering discovery when he understood the way the blood is pumped round the body by the heart in the mid-sixteenth century, the idea inevitably took some time to assert itself in the popular imagination, because for probably more than three thousand years, the heart had been considered as a moral and spiritual faculty, much more fundamentally enrooted in feeling and social relations than the physical body.

Indeed, in a more fundamental sense, we all reject a reductive materialistic conception of the heart as much as the soul, judging from the way we act and speak in our everyday lives. The heart is related to how we feel, how we love, and with our own deeper sense of identity or self-hood. Our centre is an emotional, psychic self. It is the centre that welcomes and opens up. That centre can allow us to move beyond our limits and enter into contact with others. This space inside us is the space that opens up to the world, and to God.

The Wikipedias in English, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese all provide impressive explanations of the heart, heart disease and heart failure, as well as explaining the way the heart interacts with other organs. The video images integrated into these websites undeniably provide fundamental, verifiable, and valuable information about the material reality of the heart. And this is no small advance. Given the fact that heart failure remains – with cancer – one of the main causes of mortality in the affluent Western world, our modern scientific knowledge of the heart should not be dismissed lightly. Nonetheless, language study generates a very different impression of the heart. We soon form the impression that the medical material heart is not what we bear in mind when we open up our hearts, or admit the desires in our heart of hearts.

The soul is regularly dismissed by many academics today throughout Europe and the Americas as an anachronism (see Naugle 2002). Nonetheless, the word remains productive in everyday English. And if the word is used, then we are forced to conclude that it is held to be “useful”. It refers to something that is commonly held to be meaningful. The soul circumscribes a profound and meaningful sphere of living and feeling. Evidently, as linguists or social scientists, we cannot content ourselves with a vague impression; we must strive to circumscribe its meaning in language study and elsewhere.

When we consult the COCA examples for ‘soulless’ we come across: soulless places, soulless houses, soulless tower blocks, soulless concrete and glass structures, soulless dormitories, soulless institutions, soulless bureaucracies, soulless monochrome universes. What do such references lead us to conclude? That none of this cares for us. None of these places welcome us, or make a home for us in the world. Such places scare and damage the soul. The heart is not contented in such places. And the heart cannot grow in such places. A soul that stayed in them would become stunted.

Who could survive such scarring places and experiences? Only a ‘soulless being’ or a ‘soulless creature’. Not a human being because a “soulless being” is “inhuman”. These references enable us to generate two related hypotheses

1. Humanity itself is defined in terms of the soul. The soul makes us “human”. And this sets up an opposition: a “being” is not a human being, just as a “creature” is not a human being.
2. The soul develops during life the capacity for feeling and perceiving. The capacity for living a full life develops over time, and the development of the soul can be hindered or even blocked if the growing soul is not nurtured or harmed.

“Heart” works in an analogical way. The heart is bound up in what it means to be human. But do we talk about humans in general, when we think of the heart? Or are we thinking in terms of men and women? Negation proves revealing once more: heartless teaches us what facets of the heart are being highlighted. When the world-famous rapper Kanye West (born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1977) sings “How could you be so heartless?”, this is the song of a man singing to a woman. The singer appears to find it impossible to believe – to conceive - that a woman could be so...so...heartless...so unnatural. On one level, this is because, we are all supposed to have a heart if we are human or humane. It is the jilted lover lamenting.

Nonetheless, this song forces us to ask whether the heart is not gendered; because this is very much a man singing to a woman, and if the roles were inversed, the phrase would take on a whole new meaning. Kanye West is appealing to a popular idea or myth, a folk theory, according to which the woman is defined in terms of her heart. The prototypical woman is the mother-lover; and as both mother and lover, woman teaches man to love. More than fifty years ago, the Beatles were singing a very different song, but one which implied the same folk theory of the female lover-guide when they sang “If I fell in love with you / Would you promise to be true/ And help me understand...” This conception clearly circumscribes the domain of the heart as a feminine faculty. Men may enter, but they must be led towards understanding the heart, allowed access to the heart, through the agency of woman. This is a fundamental inversion of the active male-passive female paradigm. In the ideal of the woman as knower of the heart, woman has power over man. Woman is wise because she understands what feeling and understanding really are. Men may understand things, ideas, laws and obligations, but the faculty of understanding is clearly defined as a feminine faculty in this folk theory, and men are logically made dependent on woman according to the logic of this conception.

Wisdom is ultimately what is at stake here, and woman becomes the educator. Negation once more helps us understand how this works. A loveless child, a motherless child, has difficulty learning to love others, or even to understand what love and loving is. This should help us understand why Kanye West sings his lament in a whinging whining tone. The plaintive rapper sings in a recriminating voice to his lover: How could you be so heartless? He is not simply rebuking her for abandoning him. He is questioning her fundamental identity, not as a human being but as a woman. The heartless woman – he appears to imply – is an aberration of nature. The heartless woman denies herself, in this folk tale of maternal care and romantic fidelity. She refuses her femininity. Things work very differently, if we consider how the heart is negated when we consider men in corpora and text in English.

A heartless man is a ‘bastard’ judging from the phrases and collocations found in COCA. He can be reduced to an animal state: he is a “heartless dog”/ As we can see, the opposition in play here is man vs animal. The

question of manliness does not come into play. The man loses his humanity if he is heartless, he is reduced to his egotistical bodily drives and desires. Woman, on the other hand, does not lose her humanity, but her capacity to be a woman. This implies two hierarchies, both related to status, but of essentially different kinds. Men are being considered in terms of human worth, women are being evaluated in terms of how much they live up to a supposed feminine ideal, an ideal defined in terms of how women serve men by guiding them towards the wisdom they hold in their hearts. A heartless woman is ultimately of no use to men.

This contrasts with the heartless man. Moreover, the inhuman character of the heartless man is ambiguous, because if a man is a “heartless bastard” or a “heartless dog”. He may still be popular with women; he may be what is called “a player”, or more often, “a playa”, a man who wins adoration from men, and the sexual favours of women by provocatively bending and breaking the rules, asserting his own egotistical lusts and desires, where other men remain slaves to self-inhibiting social conventions (see Urban Dictionary, or Wolfe 2005). In such cases, the insult “you heartless bastard!” becomes praise. You dare where we wouldn’t. You are true to your desires.

There is, however, a more fundamental insult encapsulated in this phrase – “You Bastard!” – one which dates back to another period: ‘bastard’ stresses that a man does not “belong”, belong to his father, to his family, to his community or to the people he associates with. So, in the history of the concept, heartless refers to men who stand outside the heart. These men have not learned how to love yet. This explains why they “play” with things. They do not enter into real relation with people. Heartless bastards have fun, they amuse themselves with games, but they live in a world of fragments – individual parts. Heartless bastards are unconnected, adrift: they cannot connect with others. They neither respect one another, nor do they know what it means to work harmoniously together as the wholesome whole should.

This does not stop the heartless bastard from attracting women, and winning the admiration of other men. But whether the “heartless bastard” he is an outcast or an object of desire, he never enters into authentic relation with others. His concept of society, social relations, colleagues, even “friends” and “family” is utilitarian. He interacts with others, exchanges with them, giving in order to get back something in return from them. He uses people. And predictably, these people are rated by him only in terms of how useful they are to him. For the heartless man, this makes sense: the parts can only use one another. In this way, he sees nothing aberrant or worthy of reproach in his conduct. For the heartless person, there is no “you”: there is only “he” and “she” and “them”; and they are all treated as an “it”, something that serves the selfish man’s needs. They are all to be used by a “me” that has not learned how to say “I”, as an invitation to enter dialogue and relation.

This is a short summary of what songs, texts, and online corpora allow us to conclude about what it means to have a heart or a soul, and what, by logical implication, it means to be heartless or soulless. Soulless places inhibit our spiritual, emotional and psychic development. We need soulful people to grow up into hearty healthy people. Heartless people are harmful for us, and spending too much time with them can irreparably scar us.

These impressions are broadly true of the texts and corpora I studied in French, Czech, German, English, American, Scottish, and Australian English. A wide range of short film interviews carried out over a year with speakers of these languages were carried out to corroborate these findings. And though, there were various minor discrepancies, the Chinese, Korean, Filipino and Russians I interviewed and who accepted to share their impressions with me, did not fundamentally contradict the idea that the heart is a faculty of understanding, a sensibility of a moral and emotional nature.

When we look more closely, things are inevitably much more complicated, but this overall impression remains intact when we stand back and ask what the heart means in different cultures and different languages. Questions of the heart introduce us to curious perversions that relate to the way the heart and the soul can be duped, twisted, destroyed, negated, or rejected. And individuals have their own personal perspectives that both confirm what they share with their cultures, and enable them to define themselves in counter-distinction, against the backdrop of the cultures they belong to. Overall, though, among the languages I was able to study, something approaching a shared multicultural concept for the heart does emerge.

### **Can we translate the heart and soul?**

Translators, ethnolinguists, and linguistic anthropologists are at ease in confronting radically different cultural concepts, and facing up to alterity in language and culture. But heart and soul are perplexing in this regard, because the overriding impression comparative analysis and translation leaves us with is that these two concepts are astoundingly easy to translate from one language to another. At other levels, we shall not escape complex problems related to grammar, figurative representations, spatial definitions, semantic associations, and negation. But at the level of lexis, word for word translation rarely seems to work so well as it does for heart and soul.

Online Bible resources, such as the Bible Study Tools website (<http://www.biblestudytools.com>) make it much easier today to compare and contrast various Bible translations. Online resources at times encourage us to make quick sweeping statements, but consulting a wide variety of printed Bibles confirms the findings and overall impression generated by the Bible Studies Tool resource, when comparing heart and the corresponding words in other languages. Consider the following verse (8:36) from the *Book of Mark*, translated into various languages

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own <b>soul</b> ? King James Version
quid enim proderit homini si lucretur mundum totum et detrimentum faciat <b>animae</b> suae, Latin Vulgate
Et que sert-il à un homme de gagner tout le monde, s'il perd son <b>âme</b> ? Louis Segond 1910
<b>36</b> ¿Y qué beneficio obtienes si ganas el mundo entero pero pierdes tu propia <b>alma</b> ? Nueva Traducción Vivente
Was hülfe es dem Menschen, wenn er die ganze Welt gewönne, und an seiner Seele Schaden? Luther Bibel 1912

Luther's German translation in its 1910 version appears most "faithful" to the Latin vulgate in stressing what does harm to the soul, rather than speaking of the "loss" of the soul. This represents a significant shift in conceptual and metaphoric framing, but the word itself, soul, is easily transposed from English into its counterpoints Seele alma, anima and âme.

Likewise, my research into the use of heart in the Old Testament invariably leads me to conclude that the heart (leb, and lebab, in Hebrew, and Kardia, in Greek) present relatively few problems for translators moving between Czech, English, German, Spanish, and French. Ezekiel speaks of the need for a loving responsive heart by contrasting it with the metaphor of a lifeless matter, stone:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the **heart of stone** out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "(Ezekiel 8:36,

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/nkjv/ezekiel/36-26.html>)

In Ezéchiel 11:19 of the Traduction Œcunémique de la Bible, in French we find "le cœur dur comme pierre" (the heart hard as stone)

And in the Book of Job, Luther translates into German, "Sein Herz ist so hart wie ein Stein." Hiob (Job) 41:16.

These various examples all show that the metaphor of hardness is used as a counterpoint to underline the fact that the human sensibility must be flexible, living, and open to interaction with others and with the divine Godhead. The heart is a social and spiritual organ, that makes men and woman godlike in that they share a capacity with God, that transcends the other animals.

Distinctions are interesting: in the same verse translated by Luther, the French TOB (page 965), quotes Ezéchiel 11:19 as: "Son cœur a durci comme la pierre". We are dealing with a quality of hardness in German, but the French presents this more as a process of hardening. And hardening the heart is a common theme in the Bible. Those who do not listen to God, and the words for obey and listen derive from the same etymology in Hebrew, turn away from God, and lose their human capacity to rise above the dust and enter into dialogue with Him and with their fellow men. This entails negating the soft flexibility of the heart which is supposed to be its true quality.

The heart itself is a complex concept. From the beginning, the heart of man is said to be evil or easily led astray. It "inclines" towards evil. In the King James Version provided on Bible Study Tools, this is expressed in Genesis 6:5 as: "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually". This contrasts with the idea that man

speaks within himself, in his heart of hearts, in his inner being, hidden from others. God himself speaks to himself in his heart in a similar manner. But this space is corruptible in man, and evil can enter, to make the heart, “evil-hearted”. There is a paradox here: the heart is essentially good, but it can be evil. This paradox is fairly easy to resolve though. The heart is a capacity, a faculty, without which, goodness is impossible, but that capacity can be perverted, negated or lost if the individual does not tend to his own heart, or neglects it, if he turns away from God and others.

These are not simply religious expressions. The google search engine, and the search for pictures finds no shortage of examples for “srdce z kamenů” (Czech for ‘heart of/from stone’). Contemporary culture and marketing, in Czech and other European languages, promote the heart of stone metaphor in the same way that ads for Yoga and Meditation courses and seminars in Czech, German, French and English invite you to “Listen to your heart”.

In more elevated circles, established culture perpetuates the same metaphor. Shakespeare echoes Ezekiel’s words, when his Titus laments the indifference of the Roman to his sons who have sacrificed their lives to save them in their beds and save Roman civilization against the Goths, but are now to be put to death by those they have served for trumped up charges. When his son rebukes him for speaking to the stones, Titus argues, they listen to him more compassionately than the hard-hearted Senators and Tribunes.

**LUCIUS**

O noble father, you lament in vain:  
The tribunes hear you not; no man is by;  
And you recount your sorrows to a stone.

**TITUS ANDRONICUS**

Ah, Lucius, for thy brothers let me plead.  
Grave tribunes, once more I entreat of you,--

**LUCIUS**

My gracious lord, no tribune hears you speak.

**TITUS ANDRONICUS**

Why, tis no matter, man; if they did hear,  
They would not mark me, or if they did mark,  
They would not pity me, yet plead I must;  
Therefore I tell my sorrows to the stones;  
Who, though they cannot answer my distress,  
Yet in some sort they are better than the tribunes,  
For that they will not intercept my tale:  
When I do weep, they humbly at my feet  
Receive my tears and seem to weep with me; (Act III:i)

(<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/titus/full.html>)

On a more popular note, the Mexican pop song diva from the 1970s and 1980s, Lucía Méndez, evokes the same metaphor of a heart of stone when she sings *Corazón de Piedra* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FocsK46kS18>). Indeed, the stone heart, the cold heart, the beating heart, and the stolen heart, all appear to be common metaphors among many European languages. And the pictures generated by Google search in French, German, Czech or Polish tend to confirm the impressions that corpora and textual analysis leave us with concerning broken hearts, and offering your heart.

**How Productive is “heart”?**

The productivity of the heart is a conceptual nexus around which various lexical resources gravitate. This proves true, if we consider English, German, French, Czech, and Polish. English provides us with a great variety of compound words and expressions making use of ‘heart’.

Lexis	Hearty Heartily
Compound words	Heartbreak Heartstrings

	Heartrending Heartland Heartburn Heartfelt Hearty/heartily
Expressions	From the heart By heart To take something to heart Set your heart on something The heart of the matter

Now let's compare this to German.

Lexis	Herz Herzhaft, hearty (Ein herzhafter Eintopf A hearty stew.) Herzlich hearty/heartily Herzig, dear, delightful Herzlichkeit, warmth, kindness, sincerity, Herzlos Mein Herz, darling Herzchen, honey (my little heart)
Compound words	Herzensangelegenheit, affair of the heart Herzeleid, heartbreak Halbherzig, half-hearted Herzerfrischend, refreshing (to the heart) Herzangst (deep/heartfelt anxiety) Herzbildung, sensitivity Der Herzbrecher, lady-killer/heartbreaker Herzdame, Queen of Hearts
Expressions	Ein gutes Herz haben, have a good heart treues Herz haben, have a true heart Ein warmes Herz haben, have a warm heart Von Herzen gern, gladly Ein Herz fassen, pluck up one's courage Die Herzen bewegen/rühren, to touch people's hearts Jmdm das Herz schwermachen Ein Herz und eine Seele sein, to be bosom friends

Of all the languages, German appears to be the most explosively productive in terms of words, compound words, and German in no way underperforms in producing rich images and striking expressions. French is weak in compound words and prefers to link nouns. But, as we can see from my translations above, even English often has to resort to such structures to translate the great variety of compound words German provides derived from 'Herz'.

In French "cœur" is very productive, in both the lexis and the imagination. Despite being weak as regards compounding, "cœur" provides the crossroads at which various fields of meanings converge and coincide.

Language	French
Compound words	--- Invariably translated into expressions Battement de cœur (heartbeat) insuffisance cardiaque (heart-failure)
Expressions	Du fond du cœur Qui fend le cœur Qui réchauffe le cœur Au cœur de Coup de cœur Cœur ouvert (heart to heart)

Czech provides us with a wide range of derived words relating to people with feeling, 'hearty' welcomes, and cordiality. Like French, on the other hand, although highly productive with affixes (suffixes and prefixes), Czech is weak on compounds.



Language	Czech
Lexis	Srdcář, can be both a doctor (cardiologist) but also a patient, and srdcář, is also used for people who fight for a cause, a kind of warrior of the heart, Srděčný hearty, sincere Srděčně, (yours) sincerely, faithfully, authentically Srděčnost, cordiality Srděčko, for addressing one's honey (dear little heart) Srdnatý stout-hearted, gallant Srdatný člověk, a stout fellow Srdcovka, bleeding heart, or tender-hearted person (in pop songs for instance)
Compound words	Milosrdenství, mercy Bůh je milosrdný, merciful: God is merciful Nemilosrdný, merciless Srdcervoucí, heartbreaking Srdceryvný, heartbreaking Dobrosrděčný, good-hearted
Expressions	Bez srdce, heartlessly Ze srdce rád, with all one's heart Od srdce, from heart to heart Až si srdce smálo it did one's heart good/till one's heart smiled Srdce mu spadlo do bot, his heart sank (into his boots)

Polish appears to provide a broadly similar range of meanings to Czech and the other languages, and the following list can easily be added to by native speakers. The few examples quoted below are simply intended as an invitation to native speakers to open up “serce” to further analysis:

Language	Polish
Lexis	Serce Serdecznie, heartily
Compound words	---
Expressions	Bez serca Zawód miłosny Z głębi serca, heartfelt Szczerza rozmowa Radujący serce

It is clear from these examples that the agglutinating force of the Germanic languages asserts itself in both words and compound words. Neither the Slavic languages, Polish or Czech, nor the Romance language, French, appear to be able to compete with them. To this degree, we can see how grammar reflects the paths and possibilities that languages open up to the imagination. The imagination is “free” to the extent that we continually reaffirm and revise the paths of language use. The work of the mind is continually forging our shared frameworks for thinking and feeling. Speech communities can go straight ahead in some cases, or they find round about ways of creating original expressions. But creative players play by the rules, bending, them and improvising in their own special ways along the lines language opens up for us. We create within linguistic contours, even if we are the ones who contribute to reshaping and redrawing those contours.

Two things are clear, at any rate The heart is a key cultural concept in all the five languages quoted above that I have investigated in my reading and research, in listening to songs and listening to the responses of those I have interviewed. The vast majority of expressions linked to the heart evoke positive values. This was the impression I was given in April 2018 by Olga and Vania two eloquent Russian students studying at the Caen University in France who allowed me to interview them on the subject of what сердце evoked for them. ([www.rep.univ-rouen.fr](http://www.rep.univ-rouen.fr)). A native Russian teacher in France gave a similar positive evaluation, although she explained that in her experience, the French tend to think with the heart (cœur), while the Russians feel more with the soul (душа) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Dv6Q-bKN1Y>).

Interviews enable us only to ask questions, gain impressions, and formulate working hypotheses. As an ethnolinguist, I am convinced we must proceed by painstakingly researching texts and corpora, and listening to people, by consulting the Media and online media. Nonetheless, The IT revolution has put undreamed of

resources at our disposal. Google Translate does appear to give a fairly reliable overall impression of what сердце might mean for Russian-speakers. If we consult the following list of Russian translations for English “heart”, we can see that the core, and the physical pump are common conceptions, But core does not necessarily mean centre, and Russian centre (центр) does not evoke “heart” when referring to headquarters and town centres in Russian. Another organic metaphor, that of the kernel or the nucleus(ядро), tends to come into play rather than the heart in Russian. And as in all languages the omnipresence of soul tends to dominate in spheres of emotional, social and spiritual life that are spoken of more in terms of heart in English or cœur in French. This tends to confirm what the Russian teacher claims, that Russian speakers speak “cœur à cœur”, while Russians speak душа к душе. This makes the Google Translate a very useful tool, as we can see from the concise summary of the various facets of the meaning of English “heart”.

сердце	heart, core, soul, bosom, ticker
душа	soul, spirit, heart, mind, psyche, inside
центр	center, heart, focus, core, headquarters, nucleus
суть	point, core, substance, heart, gist, content
сердцевина	core, heart, pith, kernel, medulla, boon
ядро	core, kernel, nucleus, heart, ball, hard core
любовь	love, amour, fondness, affection, heart, flame of love
чувства	feelings, heart, susceptibility, quick
сущность	essence, entity, nature, fact, spirit, heart
мужество	courage, bravery, guts, fortitude, virility, heart
сердечник	core, mandrel, heart, mandril
черви	Heart

(Google translate, consulted 13 June 2018, <https://translate.google.com/#en/ru/heart>)

### Is the heart “in”, or on its way out?

How frequent is “heart” used in English, and does this change over time? In English, the Google ngram viewer records roughly half as many uses “heart” in 2000 compared with 1860: ‘hearty’, and ‘heartily’ decrease sevenfold and eightfold over the same period. The social sciences, notably economics and psychology, became increasingly allergic to anything smacking of the subjective. Even literary scholars, linguists and philologists have tended to prefer, for more than a hundred years or so, terms such as “worldview” which stress the intellectual, conceptual side of understanding, at the expense of the emotion or feeling involved in experience.

But those very sciences demonstrate how short-sighted they are when authors and academics get bogged down in their own reasoning, and find themselves obliged to invent bridges between responses of an intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual nature, because they no longer have the conceptual tools to express experiences that are inextricably bound up together. Such schismatic reasoning produces curiosities such as “thought-feeling”, in T.S. Eliot’s aesthetics (Eliot quoted by Smith 1996: 89). Translators who invent brain-heart in their attempt to translate “Xin” from Chinese are grappling clumsily with the same dichotomy. And this merely demonstrates that the Anglo worldview has begun encouraging us to accept an impoverished understanding of the human heart.

Given this state of affairs, the American Historian of Ideas, Naugle argues we would do well to start thinking in terms of “the heart”, the Christian concept, rather than the morally dubious and relativistic philosophical concept of “worldview” (Naugle 2002). Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology, Linguistic Anthropology and Ethnolinguistics in most of the European traditions would contradict David Naugle. They prefer worldviews, and they seek to explain how individuals learn to apprehend the world as they are socialized into society, history,

culture and ideology. Corpora and textual analysis in French and English tends to confirm the opening statement made by Izabella Burkraba-Rylska, in Chapter Four of this book: “The concept of “soul” is essentially alien to sociological reflection”.

But as a Christian academic lecturing in an American University, David Naugle (2002) is worried. He feels that modern science, education, and the social sciences and the humanities have forgotten the heart and the soul. The enlightenment has not only robbed Christ of the limelight, but deprived him of his very role to enlighten man and teach him to cleave to God. Plunged into relativism, doubt, and feelings of misgivings about his relationships with others and with society, modern man disparages the past and worries about the future. Neither traditions nor social projects seem worthwhile or meaningful. This is the Christian reading for modernity, and that reading posits that it is the failure to cultivate the heart that is in part to blame for man’s modern condition. Naugle clearly considers that heart as a way of helping men and women to find their way back to God, to community and to a deeper sense of peace within themselves.

### Philosophy & Thinking in Language

The heart and soul are paradoxical: these keywords are deeply enrooted in the here and now, but they open up windows to other dimensions. Like all words, heart and soul, Herz and Seele, srđce and duše evolve in space and time, however, and the history of ideas affects the places these keywords occupy in the imagination. The trajectories they take, as well as the dead ends they enter into when they start slipping out of usage have to be traced as conceptual mutations. For this reason, it is certainly worth consulting the philosophers. What is the soul? What is the heart? How do philosophers define them?

Two of the greatest thinkers, Aristotle and Aquinas, are concerned with the five specific powers of the soul (Aquinas <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1076.htm>, Aristotle 1907, Aristotle 2005, *Ethics Bk 1:13*, Aristotle quoted in Tracy 1974):

1. the living soul, the vegetative soul that lives and feeds,
2. the sensitive soul that feels,
3. the appetitive soul with its desires
4. the locomotive soul that seeks to satisfy its desires and moves towards the objects of its desires
5. the intellectual soul.

Such great systematic thinkers are not to be dismissed. Their profound thoughts continue to inspire contemplation and reflection. And, as we have already seen in our study of corpora, the desires of the heart and the appetites of the soul broadly coincide in representations we have studied in the way they are understood by these two thinkers. Certainly the five-point definition above might be used to cover the various meanings related to the heart that we have spoken of so far. As in our corpora, our philosophers believe the soul seeks what it desires, and the intellectual soul can investigate the imagination or seek to join with God, just as the heart clings to God. These are deeply meaningful, basic definitions. Even when we might be inclined to question the ideas of such philosophers, we find ourselves engaged in debating with our own cultural and intellectual traditions because Aquinas and Aristotle have influenced the way we think and feel about words like the soul to a great extent in the West.

Essentially, however, defining and limiting the soul is a philosophical endeavour, perhaps for the very reason that Western philosophy, from Plato onwards, has been ESSENTIALLY interested in determining the ESSENCE of concepts. The philosophical mode of investigation means striving to gain access to some transcendental universally shared meaning. And such an aim necessarily means limiting the polysemy of the word and marginalizing or obscuring the various facets of lived everyday existence. Spheres of meaning are transformed into centres and peripheries, and peripheral meanings are subordinated to one central, dominant, prototypical core. Philosophers tend to seek out what is at heart of concepts. And to a great extent this is where their strength lies.

This essentializing mode of inquiry lies behind the realist tradition in philosophy, and it is a strong current in Anglo linguistics and philosophy today. But does this approach work for cultural keywords? When it comes to exploring all of the facets of the heart, and all the dimensions of the soul, this, ultimately proves to be a naïve

method, if it obscures the complex and subtle ways we cultivate the soul and interact with others in heart to heart or soul to soul encounters and relationships.

Behind this endeavour lies the belief – or the desire to believe – that core concepts are universal, and that the fundamental human experience of reality is basically the same all over the world. But is this so? Linguistically-enlightened scholars, such as Anna Wierzbicka (Wierzbicka 1996, Wierzbicka 1997, Harker & Wierzbicka 2001) and Cliff Goddard (Goddard 2001), demonstrate that neither the soul nor the heart are universals.

This will come as no surprise to Asians. Translators know the difficulty of translating Chinese *Xin* into English and constantly hesitate between ‘mind’ and ‘heart’, often opting for ‘heart-mind’. *Xin* is the heart that speaks to us in our “heart of hearts”. This is a serious philological and philosophical question, but it is also one that proves unavoidable in everyday cross-cultural exchanges. In my interviews with speakers of Chinese and Korean (Eunji interview), Asians expressed perplexity concerning the Western tendency to divide thinking and feeling. Interviewees suggested this could be misleading when it came to explaining the concept of *Xin*, which Korean shares with Chinese. Indeed, Eunji, a Korean-speaker, politely but firmly, stressed that Westerners tend to cut up concepts in an either-or fashion that does not correspond to the inseparable way in which feeling and thinking are conceived in Korean.

Goddard’s Natural Semantics Method leaves English-speakers perplexed in a similar manner. Goddard’s staunchly affirms that heart does not function universally as the same nexus for thinking and feeling as it does in the Anglo worldview. His study does, on the other hand, highlight the parallels between the Malay concept of “hati” (the liver) and the complex, Anglo concept of the heart with which it broadly coincides. In Goddard’s words:

(Goddard 2001: 1): the nearest English gloss for *hati* is ‘heart’ (in its emotional- moral sense) [but] the two words are not semantically identical, if only because the Malay *hati* is significantly more active, and more cognitive, than the English *heart*.

Working with the Natural Semantics Method, Goddard debunks the idea of a shared universal faculty of feeling. Goddard evokes a wide variety of “fixed expressions concerning attitudes, moods, and personal traits, e.g. *susah hati* ‘troubled, worried’, *hati keras* ‘deter-mined’, *rendah hati* ‘humble, modest’” (Goddard 2001: 1). That these expressions appear to us comprehensible tends to confirm that humans share similar sensibilities. As we can see in the following examples, the “hati” – the concept broadly equivalent to English “liver” – can be at ease, annoyed, offended, satisfied, hurt, or worried.

- *susah hati* ‘troubled, worried’,
- *senang hati* ‘relaxed, easy at heart’;
- *sakit hati* ‘annoyed, offended’,
- *puas hati* ‘satisfied (with someone)’,
- *kecil hati* ‘feel hurt’. (Goddard 2001: 1)

Nonetheless, since the concepts and arguments used by Malay-speakers and English-speakers to define, express and negotiate their feelings diverge in important respects, it is far from clear whether they are expressing the same experiences when Malay-speakers use “hati” and English-speakers use “heart”. Both Malay- and English-speakers seek to anchor emotional, intellectual, spiritual and moral experience in the body, but it is clearly not exactly the same body, and the bodily experience appears to be understood and expressed in distinct ways

How do such studies challenge the philosophers? The challenge turns out to be partial. Goddard’s paper eloquently demonstrates two fundamental points about the shared need of humans to express how they feel:

1. That the faculty of understanding and feeling is linked not only to the mind and the body, but also to the moral sense that is part of that capacity for feeling and understanding considered to be essentially “human” in Malay.
2. That we seem to need to anchor moral, emotional or conceptual impressions in bodily experience. It appears necessary for us to “locate” within the body a seat of emotions, a place in which to situate ideas, feelings, and emotions related to interacting with others in a moral or emotional way.

Indeed, however far back we go, the soul is associated with the throat, with the stomach, the guts, the heart, the lungs, as well as the head in various language systems. The individual locations are experiential, deeply felt: parts of the body are clearly in play. But ultimately, the exact location is perhaps, somewhat arbitrary. After all,

bodily representations act more like metonymies than metaphors, evoking the tip of an experience that is fuller and more multiple than any precise bodily reaction. The mouth may grow dry, the breathing may become stifled, the heart may beat more rapidly, and we may feel a nervousness running down our spines, and tingling in our toes and our fingertips, under the duress of a single emotional response. It is not so much that heart – a part – as the whole body that comes into play when our emotions manifest themselves in physical feeling.

“If I have combined – and then opposed – philosophers and ethnolinguists it is to highlight their different methodologies, aims, and objections. Philosophers help us to limit and define our concepts. They systematize and schematize; but how far are our thoughts and feelings alike cross-culturally speaking? And how far can we trust philosophers who speak to us of universals, and strive to circumscribe clear-cut concepts transposable across cultures? How far can we trust dominant cultures to understand less powerful cultures with concepts, terms, definitions, and values that are not their own?

It is clear that in Malay, French and in German we understand and express our emotions and our bodily and emotional responses in different terms. And even in English, it now appears to us curious to speak of an upset tummy as “mal au cœur” in French, although English-speakers once invented the term “heartburn” and English-speakers still speak of “gut reactions”.

### **The Ethnolinguistic Challenge**

The body, experience and linguistic expression take us into confusion and contrasts. Meanings appear as blurred and fuzzy. Should this dismay us? Or should we rejoice in the kaleidoscopic variety of human experience, and celebrate the wide variety of ways we express our experience? From the ethnolinguistic point of view, translating becomes an observation tower, a lookout point. Gazing across the world of experience from one language into another, we see similar forms and shades and hues, but those shades and shapes form very different landscapes. French cœur is not Anglo heart, German Herz is not Czech srdce. And Malay (Goddard 2001) and Yolngu an indigenous Australian language (see Frances Morphy 2018) simply do not need “heart”. And it would be misleading to assume the speakers of such languages “lack” a concept of heart.

From the ethnolinguistic perspective, this is not simply a philosophical conundrum: it is a moral challenge. It is the key to understanding what we do not understand, when we encounter very different worldviews. If we refuse this, and if we try to make “them” fit into “our” terms, we remain stuck in our own prejudice and narrow-minded self-satisfied paradigms. If we insist on believing that cultures think and feel in mutually coinciding concepts, we simply strip those cultures of many of their core meanings. We fail to meet them. Our worldviews do not clash, they simply pass by one another like cars on the highway at night: indifferent, oblivious. If we accept to highlight one dimension of our key concepts at the expense of others, we impoverish the reality that we experience in everyday life. We blind ourselves to many of the shiny facets that make these keywords, beautiful, and profoundly useful.

This is the aesthetic challenge of ethnolinguistics. Cultural difference, aesthetic response, and feeling are all somewhat challenging for philosophers, because they are resolutely personal, subjective, and because these experiences are invariably shared. Philosophers tend to seek to extract an unchanging clearly circumscribed truth from lived experience. But can we do this when we speak of the heart? Probably, if we try, we will find that we have ripped the heart from the body to get a better grip of it. This may reassure some people who need to get their hands on ideas in order to feel they master them. But this is the method of the butcher. And extracting the heart does indeed reduce the organ to mere meat. In no way, can the heart fulfil its function, even at a physical bodily level, if it is extracted from the body. And in parallel to this, the heart and soul are cut off from their nature and their function if we subtract them from the “we” of community and shared human relations.

For some thinkers this is a problem: words and concepts don’t fit. But for the ethnolinguist, this proves the very *raison d’être*, the value of linguistic anthropology and translation studies. It reminds us that we think in language. Since Wilhelm von Humboldt, ethnolinguists have recognized that we think with particular language systems, French, Polish, German and so on. Language is not simply a means of expression, a tool. Languages enable us to learn to think together. This is *Sprachdenken*, thinking-in-language, and that concept opens up the horizons for a philosophy of language that is infinitely richer, and more meaningful than traditional Western modes of thinking, analysing, and synthesizing, and critically appraising what concepts are and how terms must be defined. If we understand that heart and soul are not mere concepts but are keywords that are both intimately bound up in how

we begin to learn to master concepts, to communicate and to share experience, then that makes the ethnolinguistic approach not simply a pastime for academics and university students. It makes studying the cultural concepts urgent for our global community today.

Emmanuel Kant was concerned with the way we create concepts and with the fate of humanity. His anthropology was no less important for him than his study of Reason and the way we develop our faculty of understanding. Kant was more concerned with Geist than with Herz and Seele, however. And since his days, Anglo philosophers and scientists have tended to focus more on “brain” than “mind”. Meanwhile, in the nineteenth century, a growing desire to move towards an objectivizing positivism tended to marginalize “heart” and “soul”. But if we reach back into our own tradition, and if we explore other traditions, we may find enlightening concepts that can clarify the way we think and feel.

### Translation as a Look-Out Point

Such questions take us beyond the scope of this short chapter. But language study, translating, and ethnolinguistic research certainly remind us that the heart and soul are still very much at the centre of our lives, although many of those who seek to educate and instruct us, tend to feel the contrary is true, or should be so. In this way, exploring other languages can remind us of our own experience in two important ways. It can remind us of meanings that have become lost. And it can help us make meaningful associations and links between ideas that we feel to be right or logical, although our languages tend to encourage us to divide experience into separate entities. It is probable that such schismatic thinking causes more problems than it solves in “explaining” the meaning of experience and the “sense” we make of our lives.

In this respect, the way we translate English “heart” into Czech can prove enlightening, because it demonstrates that Czech translators have had to assimilate one mode of dividing and linking concepts and find similar patterns or paths to reconstruct the same meanings. Jan Caha, and Jiří Krámský’s 877-page *Anglicko-slovník*, published in 1964, provides a fascinating and accurate definition in Czech words for what the English mean by “heart” in all of the contexts they encountered the word. The definition proves perplexing for English-speakers, and, interestingly, it does not coincide with the five facets of our philosophers.

It is my contention that the Czech lexicographers have something to teach monolingual English-speakers about the dimensions of the heart that they only partially glimpse: they show us the way various concepts come into play in the Anglo worldview and are closely linked in the linguistic patterning of English for them. In the Anglo mind, “heart” covers the following meanings in Czech. I have offered word for word translations of the Czech terms in order to highlight the diversity of meanings that are extricated and transposed into Czech. Logically, each one can be rendered as “heart”, if translated back into English. But what do we mean by “heart”? Given the complexity and diversity of the meanings, it seems unlikely that an English-speaker would find it easy to explain more than a few of these, if asked to. And despite the eloquence of many the English-speakers who were kind enough to let me interview them, few came up with anything approaching such an eloquent summary as the following one that the Czech lexicographers provided. For these Czech translators, “heart” means:

srdce	heart
prsa	breast/breasts
nitro	the interior, heart, inward nature/mind, for intérieur, heart of hearts
mysl, duše, duch	mind, soul, spirit
cit, citivost	feeling, sensibility
podstata	basis
odvaha	courage
temperament	temperament?
drahoušek	Dear, Honey, Darling
člověk	human being, man

This list demonstrates two things:

- ten, not five concepts are in play,
- many of the single definitions prove perplexingly complex.

What is this heart of heart, the nitro, the inner soul, that the French call “le for intérieur”? And can we consider “mind”, “soul” and “spirit” to be synonyms? For Jan Caha and Jiří Krámský, *mysl*, *duše* and *duch*, mind, soul, and spirit, can often be used interchangeably. In the same way, “heart” and “soul” are often used in the same way in English when English-speakers encourage people “to put their heart and soul into something”.

To a disconcertingly great degree, translating “heart” proves easy, if we consider the word alone. But the way the word works in the worldview of each language, and the way our understanding of this keyword changes from situation to situation, and changes over time, proves perplexing. Discerning how words and meanings fail to coincide across languages is fascinating. It takes us back to language study. But language study opens up for us, not a can of worms, not a headache, not a set of problems, but a whole range of new horizons. And perhaps the journeys we take into ethnolinguistics bring us closer to who we are, and what we are, and what we do and say in words. And that, for the ethnolinguist is the heart of the matter.

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