Towards a cross-cultural lexical map of wellbeing

Tim Lomas

School of Psychology, University of East London, London, UK

Introduction

Positive psychology (PP) can be regarded as Western-centric, as indeed can psychology more generally (Becker & Marecek, 2008). Like all systems of knowledge, PP is culturally-situated, influenced in its case by the mainly Western contexts in which it has historically been formed and developed. For instance, much of its empirical work has involved scholars and participants described by Henrich et al. (2010) as WEIRD, belonging to societies that are generally Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic. As a result, the concepts developed within PP are biased towards ways of thinking and understanding the world that are dominant in Western cultures, like a North American tradition of 'expressive individualism' (Taylor, 1986). Yet PP, and indeed psychology more broadly, is often unaware of its situatedness, with its cultural bias constituting a 'disguised ideology' (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008). As such, PP would benefit from greater cross-cultural engagement, awareness, and understanding. Indeed, such efforts are already underway across the field.

One example is my own initiative, an evolving lexicography of untranslatable words – i.e., without exact equivalent in English – relating to wellbeing. One aim of the project is to help PP develop an enriched conceptual 'map' of wellbeing, featuring concepts which have been identified in other languages but not in English (and which, as a result, have mostly not yet been incorporated into psychology). In the initial paper establishing the project (Lomas, 2016b), I located and analysed 216 words, generating a provisional thematic 'map' featuring six categories, paired into three meta-categories: feelings (including *positive feelings* and *ambivalent feelings*); relationships (including *love* and *prosociality*); and development (including *character* and *spirituality*). Subsequently, over 1,400 new words have been added to the lexicography. Analysis of these has provided further detail with respect to the categories, allowing the elucidation of their internal thematic structure (which was not identified in the initial paper). In addition, the subsequent analysis has also identified six further categories (which are still accommodated within the three meta-category structure). Thus feelings (since renamed 'qualia') now also includes *cognition* and *embodiment*, relationships includes *aesthetics* and *eco-connection*, and development includes *competence* and *understanding*.

This paper summarizes this updated analysis. First though, in this introduction I highlight the value of this kind of work. I begin by discussing cross-cultural variation in the way people experience and understand the world, drawing in particular on linguistic differences, and considering the implications that such variation has for psychology. I then address the significance of untranslatable words, arguing that these signify aspects of the world that one's culture has overlooked. As such, it is

proposed that PP (and psychology in general) would benefit from engaging with such words, as the subsequent analysis itself aims to demonstrate.

The Challenge of Linguistic Relativity

Psychology has inevitably been influenced by the cultural contexts in which it has developed and been practised. In that respect, one might speak of multiple 'ethnopsychologies' across the globe at varying levels of scale, from the transnational to the subnational. However, over recent decades, Western ethnopsychology, and specifically American ethnopsychology, has come to dominate the field – i.e., academic psychology as an international endeavour – to the extent that it is often regarded uncritically as psychology *in toto* (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008). Analysing these power dynamics, Danziger (2002) suggests that prior to the Second World War were various centres of knowledge and practice, including Berlin, Cambridge, and Chicago, as well as peripheral locations where such knowledge/practice was reproduced. However, the post-war economic and military dominance of the United States meant that American psychology was exported globally, effectively becoming the sole centre, to the extent that the adjective 'American' soon became erased as superfluous. This has meant that concepts, ideologies, priorities, and methods associated with American psychology have come to dominate the international scene. One aspect of this dominance is that (American) English has become the default language for the field. This means that most of its ideas and theories are structured around the contours of the English language. This linguistic bias is an issue, since the knowledge developed within the field is therefore to an extent provincial and culturally-specific. The significance of this issue can be understood in terms of the 'linguistic relativity hypothesis' (LRH).

The idea that culture, via language, influences thought can be traced back centuries. It is common to track this line of thinking – now usually referred to using the label LRH – at least as far as Herder (1772), who argued that differences in the mentalities of individual countries derived in large part from the nature of their language. Entering the modern era, these ideas found their most prominent articulation with the anthropologists Sapir (1929) and Whorf (1940), to the extent that the LRH is sometimes called the 'Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis.' In line with the general tenets of the LRH, they argued that language plays a constitutive role in the way people experience and understand life. As Whorf put it, 'We dissect nature along lines laid out by our native languages ... The world is presented as

a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized ... largely by the linguistic systems in our minds' (pp.213–214). Such linguistic parsing takes two main forms: grammatical structure and lexical content. According to Whorf, the most impactful relativity effects pertain to the former, an argument endorsed by many subsequent theorists (Lucy, 1996). Cultural differences in grammar are thought to exert a potent effect on cognition and experience, since grammar structures are arguably more foundational to the mind than lexical frameworks, which fit within the structures provided by grammar. Nevertheless, cultural differences in lexical content are still significant. Thus, the key message of the LRH is that language affects the way people experience the world (with the debates within the LRH literature centring on how and to what extent it does).

The LRH therefore challenges the preconceptions and assumptions of fields such as psychology, for instance regarding the nature of the self and its relationship with the world. Or more specifically, one might say it challenges Western ethnopsychology, which despite being culturally-situated, tends to regard itself uncritically as having universal relevance and scope. But that challenge need not be regarded as a negative. One can argue that psychology would benefit from a thoroughgoing engagement with the implications of the LRH. Indeed, it already *has* benefitted, with a wealth of scholarship exploring the significance of the LRH in intersecting paradigms such as cross-cultural psychology (Berry, 2000), indigenous psychology (Kim et al., 2006), and discursive psychology (Quigley, 2001). In that respect, one fruitful line of enquiry is the study of so-called untranslatable words.

Engaging with Untranslatability

While untranslatability is a contested phenomenon, it commonly refers to a word that lacks an exact equivalent in a given other language. The value of such words is manifold. First, they assist in understanding other cultures, offering insights into their values, traditions, philosophies, and ways of being. The theoretical context here is the aforementioned LRH, the stronger version of which is linguistic determinism, whereby language inextricably constitutes thought, whereas the milder relativistic version simply asserts that language shapes it. In relation to untranslatability, the stronger view implies that only people from the culture that produced a word can truly understand or experience the phenomenon it signifies (Taylor, 1986). However, the milder perspective holds that such words are to an extent accessible to people outside the culture, holding some universal relevance. This latter point highlights a second aspect of

interest regarding untranslatable words: beyond being informative vis-à-vis the culture that created a given word, they enrich *other* lexica. Indeed, cultures 'borrowing' words from each other is central to language development. For instance, of the more than 600,000 lexemes in the OED, the percentage of borrowed words – also known as loanwords – is estimated to be as high as 41% (Tadmor, 2009).

Of particular interest here is *why* words are borrowed. Haspelmath (2009) identifies two main reasons: core versus cultural borrowings. The former is when a loanword replicates a word that already exists (i.e., with similar meanings) in the recipient language. This tends to happen for sociolinguistic reasons (e.g., cultural capital associated with using foreign words). This type of borrowing is not of concern here. However, the latter category is central. This occurs when the recipient language lacks its own word for a referent (e.g., if a new practice or idea is introduced to a culture). On this point, Pavlenko (2000) makes a useful distinction between conceptual and semantic representation: the former refers to any phenomenon that a human can potentially experience, learn, or understand; the latter relates to whether that phenomenon has been given a lexical label by a particular language. Thus, it is possible that although a language may lack semantic representation of a certain phenomenon, speakers of that language may nevertheless have some approximate conceptual representation of it. This may mean, for instance, experiencing and conceptualising a particular emotional state, even if the person lacks a specific label for it (see Pavlenko (2008) for further analysis of the nuances of cross-cultural differences in emotional representation). In many such instances, the loanword may be adopted for pragmatic reasons: it is cognitively and socially useful, allowing speakers to articulate concepts they had previously struggled to. In Lehrer's (1974, p. 105) terminology, such words fill 'semantic gaps,' i.e., 'the lack of a convenient word to express what [one] wants to speak about.' It is such gaps that make words untranslatable, indicating phenomena that have been overlooked or undervalued by one's own culture, but which another culture has identified and articulated.

Thus, a central premise of my lexicography is that such words can enrich the nomological network in psychology (and English more broadly). As articulated in a theoretical article outlining the foundations of the project (Lomas, 2018a), one of the main functions of language is as a form of 'cartography.' Language helps people 'map' the worlds they encounter (including the 'outer' external world in which they are situated, and their 'inner' subjective world of qualia). However, a key insight of the LRH is that different languages map these worlds in subtly different ways. For instance, one culture may have mapped a particular 'region' of experience with much less detail than another. This may happen for various complex reasons, including factors such as climate, geography, and the values and traditions at play in the respective cultures. One well-known example is the suggestion that Eskimo-Aleut languages possess many different words relating to snow and ice (more so than in English). The issue is complicated, since such languages are agglutinative, creating complex words by combining morphemes. Thus, some linguists argue they do not possess greater complexity per se than English, since the latter can use adjectives to similar effect (Pullum, 1989). However, pragmatically, those cultures are influenced by environments dominated by snow and ice in ways that most English-speaking cultures are not. As such, Eskimo-Aleut languages contain many more relevant words in common usage as do the languages of other geographically similar places. For instance, analysing the North Sami language, Magga (2006, p. 25) points out that knowledge of snow and ice is a 'necessity for subsistence and survival,' and estimates over 1,000 such lexemes in common usage. Thus, compared to English, their lexical map of snow and ice is far more granular. Then, besides variation in detail, there are other ways in which languages may map the world differently. For instance, even if their level of complexity vis-à-vis a given phenomenon is comparable, languages may differ in where they draw their boundary 'lines,' thereby segmenting it in subtly different ways. One example is variation in the way different cultures parse the colour spectrum into discrete colours (Lucy, 1996).

In such variation in mapping can the significance of untranslatable words be appreciated. They represent phenomena which have been mapped by another language – i.e., circumscribed by a conceptual boundary, and labelled with a word – but which have not been similarly identified in our own. Thus, there is considerable potential for refining and enriching our own particular maps by engaging with other languages, and especially by studying their untranslatable words. It is this goal that animates the lexicographic project, which seeks to apply this potential to psychology (and PP specifically), thereby redressing its Western-centricity. In this way, it is possible to enhance the field's map of its subject area, thus augmenting its nomological network, as the rest of the paper illustrates.

Methods

In the paper establishing the lexicography (Lomas, 2016b), I identified 216 untranslatable words pertaining to wellbeing through a 'quasi-systematic' review of

academic and grey literature (*quasi* in that there was insufficient material in academic psychology journals to permit a conventional systematic review). Readers interested in the process are encouraged to consult this original paper; suffice to say here that the search protocol had several elements (including examining the first 20 websites returned when entering 'untranslatable words' into Google). Once the 216 words had been identified, robust definitions were sought though several sources, including on-line dictionaries, peer-reviewed academic publications, and bilingual colleagues. The words and their definitions were then analysed using grounded theory (GT), a methodology which allows theory to emerge inductively from the data via three main coding stages (open, axial, and selective). In a process of open coding, the data – words and their definitions – were examined for emergent themes, assisted by other GT processes such as memoing and initial theorising. Axial coding then involved comparing themes through constant comparison, and grouping them into categories based on conceptual similarity. Six categories were produced, paired into three meta-categories: feelings (*positive feelings* and *ambivalent feelings*); relationships (*love* and *prosociality*); and development (*character* and *spirituality*). Finally, selective coding saw the identification of a 'core' category of wellbeing. Although applying GT in this way might be deemed unconventional, there is considerable heterogeneity in the studies purporting to use GT, and it is sufficiently aligned with GT principles to be considered one such example.

Following this initial paper, the lexicography has since gradually expanded to over 1,600 words, partly through crowd-sourced contributions to a webpage created to host the project (www.drtimlomas.com/lexicography), and partly through my own follow-up enquiries via 'conceptual snowballing.' The term snowballing derives from recruitment, where participants facilitate the involvement of additional people. This metaphor has been borrowed to reflect the way enquiries into an untranslatable word might lead one to encounter related concepts. For instance, although nearly 150 languages are currently represented in the lexicography, many words are taken from a select group that are especially well-studied in psychologically-oriented literature, including Chinese, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Pāli, and Sanskrit. Thus, an enquiry into a word from these languages would often lead me to a text in which related words are discussed (which would then be added to the lexicography). In incorporating a word, the same checking procedures were followed as in the initial paper. Moreover, once words and their definitions had been included, they

were accessible on the website for public inspection and feedback (with people sometimes suggesting a refined definition of the word), providing a further credibility check (which is valued in GT). This subsequent phase of data collection cannot be regarded as systematic (not even in the 'quasi' sense of the original paper). Indeed, some 7,000 languages exist worldwide, and it is unlikely that one research project could study them all and retrieve their relevant words. However, even if the lexicography is an incomplete work-in-progress, one may still usefully analyse its existing words and emergent themes, even if such analyses are partial and subject to revision.

Indeed, with the addition of the new words, the thematic structure outlined in the original paper has been updated. This updating has taken two main forms: (a) the refinement of the initial six categories; and (b) the identification of six new categories. With respect to (a), with the addition of new words to the lexicography, it was possible to undertake more detailed GT analyses of the initial six categories. In the foundational paper establishing the basic thematic structure (Lomas, 2016b), I was only able to identify the categories per se; there were insufficient data to elucidate their internal structure. However, with the subsequent addition of more than 1,400 words, by once again employing the same GT approach, it was possible to identify an internal structure for each category, articulating various themes within them. Taking the updated list of over 1,600 words, an initial review suggested that each existing category now included between 100 and 200 relevant words. At the same time, with respect to (b), this initial review of the updated list also suggested various *new* categories. That is, although many of the new words could be accommodated within the initial six-category structure, significant new large clusters of words were also emerging, likewise featuring between around 100 and 200 words (bearing in mind that some words can be situated within more than one category). Thus, in addition to the six existing categories, six new categories also were identified.

Twelve separate analyses were then conducted, one for each category. Having identified the relevant words for each category, the words were again analysed using the GT variation developed in my original paper. As before, the data comprised the set of words and their definitions. These definitions had been refined and checked in the ways outlined above (e.g., consulting dictionaries, peer-reviewed sources, and bilingual speakers, together with website feedback). In the first stage of open coding, the words and their definitions were examined for thematic content. Next, words were grouped together through constant comparison into themes,

producing the internal structure for each category. These categories, and their internal structure, are elucidated below.

Results and Discussion

As noted above, in the initial GT analysis of 216 words that established the foundation for the lexicography (Lomas, 2016b), I identified six main categories. With the gradual addition of over 1,400 new words to date, it has been possible to conduct and publish analyses of each category separately, revealing their internal structure: *positive feelings* (Lomas, 2017a), *ambivalent feelings* (Lomas, 2017b), *love* (Lomas, 2018c), *prosociality* (Lomas, 2018b), *character* (Lomas, 2019c), and *spirituality* (Lomas, 2019a). In addition, the new words have also led to the identification of six further categories – still within the three meta-category structure – as illustrated below in Figure 1. The first meta-category – since renamed using the more-encompassing label of qualia – now also includes *cognition* and *embodiment* . The second meta-category of relationships now also includes *aesthetics* and *eco-connection* (Lomas, 2019b). And the third meta-category of development now also includes *competence* and *understanding* . These categories will be briefly introduced in turn, together with some commentary on their significance for the conceptual map of wellbeing in PP.

For each category, I have constructed a visual diagrammatic 'map,' illustrating its internal thematic structure. Within these figures are examples of untranslatable words that relate to each theme in question. Further details of these words – and indeed all words currently included in the lexicography – can be found in the supplementary data table (and online at www.drtimlomas.com/lexicography). This table organises the words according to theme, and also provides details for each word including: the language with which it is commonly associated (which, one should note, is not necessarily the language in which it originated, given that it has not yet been possible to conduct detailed etymological analyses of words included in the project); the grammatical part of speech it constitutes; a basic pronunciation guide (involving both the International Phonetic Alphabet, and a rough phonetic spelling); and a basic, non-exhaustive description of some of the word's meanings (given that most words are complex and polysemous).

Positive Feelings

In the first meta-category of qualia, the first category is *positive feelings* (Lomas, 2017a). Analysis of this category revealed a wealth of positively-valenced feelings, with valence referring to whether a feeling is experienced subjectively as pleasant (i.e., positively-valenced) or unpleasant (i.e., negatively-valenced) (see Colombetti (2005) for a more detailed analysis of the term 'valence'). Here such feelings cover seven broad overlapping themes, as outlined in Figure 2 below. There is some parallel with Ekman's (2019) Atlas of Emotions project, which deconstructs 'enjoyment' according to a spectrum of intensity or arousal (although it does not elucidate how this granularity was arrived at). In the present context, the invocation of terms like 'arousal' reflects its use in models like Russell's (1980) influential circumplex model of emotions. That framework posits that affective states are generated through the interaction of two independent neurophysiological systems, valence (pleasant vs. unpleasant), and arousal (active vs. passive), where the latter reflects the physiological and/or phenomenological intensity of affective experiences. In the current analysis, each theme was labelled using two broad conceptually-similar English constructs that
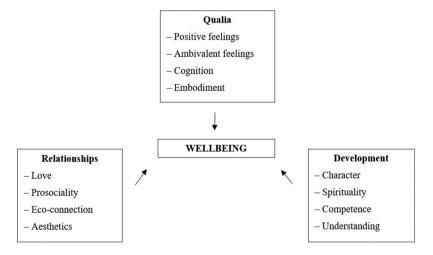

Figure 1. Wellbeing

Peace / Calm
– Relaxed attentiveness (e.g., *sati*)
– Tranquility (e.g., *seijaku*)
– Acceptance (e.g., *ataraxia*)

Contentment / Satisfaction
– Secure warmth (e.g., *hygge*)
– Rested (e.g., *morgenfrisk*)
– Pride (e.g., *fiero*)

Bliss / Nirvana
– Blessed (e.g., *béatitude*)
– Grace (e.g., *charis*)
– Self-transcendence (e.g., *ānanda*)

Cosiness / Homeliness
– Snugness (e.g., *cwtch*)
– Safety (e.g., *Geborgenheit*)
– Soulful milieu (e.g., *Gemütlichkeit*)

POSITIVE FEELINGS

Joy / Euphoria
– Delight (e.g., *harikoa*)
– Rapture (e.g., *ekstasis*)
– Orgasm (e.g., *jouissance*)

Savouring / Appreciation
– Absorption (e.g., *hugfanginn*)
– Admiration (e.g., *njuta*)
– Immersion (e.g., *dhyāna*)

Fun / revelry
– Enjoyment (e.g., *craic*)
– Passion (e.g., *kefi*)
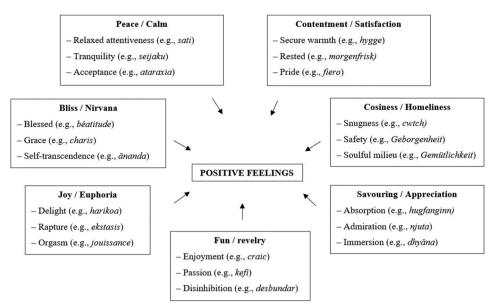– Disinhibition (e.g., *desbundar*)

Figure 2. Positive feelings

roughly encompass the terrain in question. As with all categories, these themes were not monolithic, but comprised words which differed in subtle ways. Often the words denote a more precise phenomenological region than that covered by the English thematic labels. For instance, *jouissance* tends to constitute a specific instance of euphoria, often connected to sexual activity. Occasionally, the word might occupy a phenomenological region that merely overlaps with the label headings. For instance, within contentment and satisfaction is the Danish concept of *hygge*, which is rapidly becoming known in English-speaking cultures and acquiring the status of a loanword. While this term does connote contentment/satisfaction, it also alludes to concepts such as cosiness and homeliness. Overall, the diversity of words encompassed by this category highlights the limitations of referring generically to 'positive affect,' or even differentiating by high versus low arousal, which is how variation in this arena is usually alluded to (Lee et al., 2013). Thus, the analysis points towards the value of developing a more fine-grained appreciation of the nuances of this emotional territory.

Ambivalent Feelings

Also in the meta-category of qualia is the category of *ambivalent feelings* (Lomas, 2017b). Known also as 'mixed emotions,' such affective states blend positive and negative valence, either simultaneously or sequentially (Carrera & Oceja, 2007). A classic example is longing, defined as a 'blend of the primary emotions of happiness and sadness' (Holm et al., 2002, p. 608). Here, five themes were identified (one of which is

longing), as captured in Figure 3. *Ambivalent feelings* may not usually be associated with wellbeing, which conventionally has been linked to positive affect. However, scholars are increasingly appreciative of the value of such emotions, as articulated by the notion of 'second wave' PP (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016). For instance, emotional ambivalence has been linked to outcomes such as creativity (Moss & Wilson, 2014) and judgement accuracy (Rees et al., 2013). The words comprising this category tend to be culturally valued as being linked to flourishing in some way. For instance, in Zen Buddhism, sensitivity to the pathos and ephemerality of life – as reflected in terms like *mono no aware* – is regarded as integral to spiritual insight (Lomas et al., 2017). Other items are linked to phenomena such as identity, with the concept of *saudade,* for instance, deemed a 'key Portuguese emotion' (Silva, 2012, p. 201) and 'an emotional state that pervades Brazilian culture and thought' (Feldman, 2001, p. 51). This category thus highlights the importance of expanding our conception of wellbeing beyond simply positively-valenced affective states to also include ambivalent ones.

Cognition

In the second analytic iteration of the lexicography – generated by the addition of over 1,400 new words – two further categories have been identified pertaining to qualia: *cognition* and *embodiment*. The former essentially covers the psychological dynamics by which qualia are processed and experienced. Here five main themes emerged, as illustrated below in Figure 4. Again, considerable granularity is provided by the various
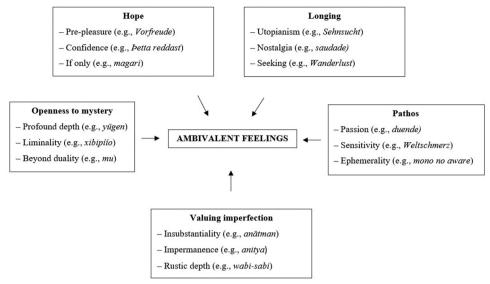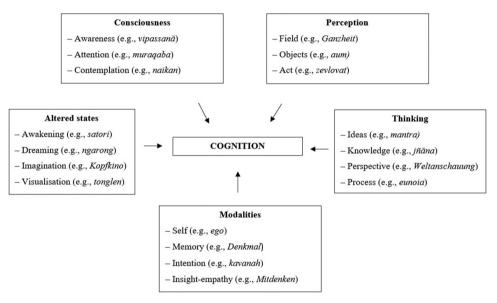
Figure 3. Ambivalent feelings

Figure 4. Cognition

subthemes (and the words which helped form these), which draw out nuances of the theme in question. For instance, one of the main themes is consciousness, which includes the subthemes of attention, awareness, and contemplation. Psychology has already explored these concepts in depth - and correspondingly has developed a detailed conceptual lexicon - such as identifying various attention modalities (Posner & Petersen, 1990), and differentiating between access and phenomenal awareness (Fell, 2004). However, untranslatable words can help refine our understanding in this area still further. A case in point is the burgeoning interest over recent decades in the Buddhist-derived concept

and practice of mindfulness. This development is the result of scholars engaging with the Pāḷi term *sati*, which was rendered – somewhat imperfectly, one might argue – as 'mindfulness' in the early 20th century by T. W. Rhys Davids (Lomas, 2017c). Over subsequent decades, researchers have paid considerable attention to elucidating its nature, and honing interventions to facilitate it (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In the process, psychology has been much enriched, conceptually and practically. In future, such enrichment could be assisted further by the field engaging with the many other concepts pertaining to attention and awareness that exist in languages like Pāḷi.

Embodiment

The second new category that emerged in relation to qualia is *embodiment*. This term essentially refers to all aspects of our subjective experience of having a body. Or, put another way, and paraphrasing the philosopher Nagel (1974), what is it like to *be* a body. The range of phenomena encompassed here was nicely elucidated by Jackson (1982) – who was pivotal in developing the concept of qualia – including 'the hurtfulness of pains, the itchiness of itches, pangs of jealousy, or about the characteristic experience of tasting a lemon, smelling a rose, hearing a loud noise or seeing the sky' (p. 127). Here, five main themes were identified, as shown below in Figure 5. This category is not only important terrain for psychology to explore when considering wellbeing, but moreover one which has tended to be somewhat overlooked. For instance, Seligman (2008) lamented the fact that PP tended to be a 'neck-up' focused discipline; i.e., that while understandably interested in the mind, it had neglected the bodily aspects of wellbeing. To that end, he encouraged people to also attend to 'positive health' (i.e., physical wellbeing beyond the absence of illness and disease). Subsequently there has been some movement in the field towards considering these areas, as elucidated in, and exemplified by, Hefferon's (2013) book *Positive Psychology and The Body*. Nevertheless, the bodily manifestation and experience of wellbeing remains an under-studied and under-theorised topic, to which it will be important to pay more attention in the years ahead.

Love

Moving to the second meta-category of relationships, my initial analysis of this (Lomas, 2016b) generated two categories: *love* (bonds to select close people and phenomena), and *prosociality* (connection to others more broadly). With *love*, the value of exploring untranslatable words to bring greater granularity was particularly evident (as articulated in Lomas, 2018c). Perhaps few emotional states are as cherished as love, with surveys consistently reporting it to be among the most sought-after and valorised of experiences (Wilkins & Gareis, 2006). Yet few concepts are as *broad* – 'polysemous in the extreme,' as Berscheid (2010, p. 6) puts it – with the label encompassing a vast range of phenomena, spanning diverse spectra of intensity, valence, and duration, and used for all kinds of relationships, objects, and experiences. In Murstein's (1988, p. 33) words, love is an 'empire uniting all sorts of feelings, behaviors, and attitudes, sometimes having little in common.' Given its polysemous nature, scholars have sought to create theoretical typologies of forms of love. For instance, an influential effort by Lee (1977) drew on distinctions elucidated in the classical age to point towards six 'styles' of loving. He identified three 'primary' forms: *érōs* (romantic, passionate); *ludus* (flirtatious, playful), and *storgē* (filial, fraterna). By pairing these, three further types arose from the permutations: *prâgma* (rational, sensible; a combination of *ludus* and *storgē*); *mania* (possessive, dependent; a combination of *érōs* and *ludus*); and *agápē* (charitable, selfless; a combination of *érōs* and *storgē*). While this typology does bring greater granularity to the topic, it mainly covers varieties of *romantic* relationships (between people who identify as 'partners'). Thus, the present analysis introduces further granularity by identifying 14 'flavours' (with this term being used to avoid pigeon-holing relationships as exclusively just one type,
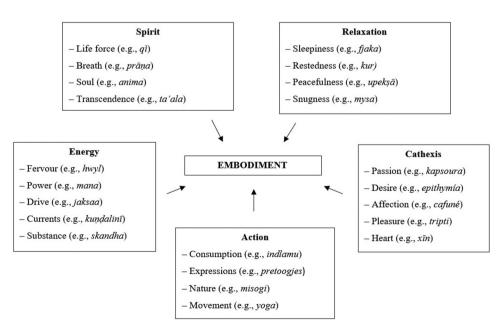

Spirit
– Life force (e.g., *qì*)
– Breath (e.g., *prāṇa*)
– Soul (e.g., *anima*)
– Transcendence (e.g., *ta'ala*)

Relaxation
– Sleepiness (e.g., *fjaka*)
– Restedness (e.g., *kur*)
– Peacefulness (e.g., *upekṣā*)
– Snugness (e.g., *mysa*)

Energy
– Fervour (e.g., *hwyl*)
– Power (e.g., *mana*)
– Drive (e.g., *jaksaa*)
– Currents (e.g., *kuṇḍalinī*)
– Substance (e.g., *skandha*)

EMBODIMENT

Cathexis
– Passion (e.g., *kapsoura*)
– Desire (e.g., *epithymía*)
– Affection (e.g., *cafuné*)
– Pleasure (e.g., *tripti*)
– Heart (e.g., *xīn*)

Action
– Consumption (e.g., *indlamu*)
– Expressions (e.g., *pretoogjes*)
– Nature (e.g., *misogi*)
– Movement (e.g., *yoga*)
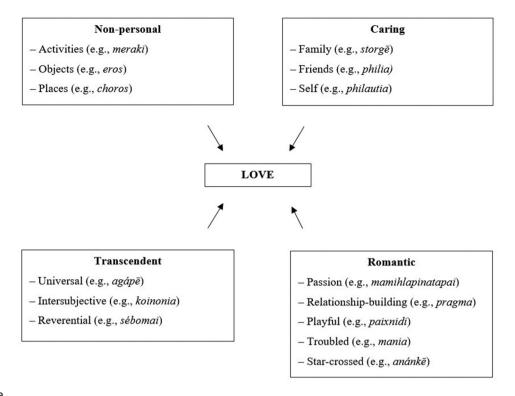
Figure 5. Embodiment

Figure 6. Love

but rather as potentially a blend of more than one flavour). These flavours can in turn be organised into four main 'types' of connection, as illustrated below in Figure 6.

Prosociality

In addition to close bonds to select others (and phenomena), the initial analysis of relationships pointed to the value of *prosociality*, i.e., good relations with people 'in general' (Lomas, 2018b). Here five main themes were identified, as outlined below in Figure 7. The main significance of this category is that these dimensions of wellbeing are thought to be somewhat overlooked in societies that are relatively more individualistic, particularly Anglophone Western countries. Indeed, that the West tends towards individualism – in contrast to the supposed 'collectivism' of Eastern cultures – is one of the most prominent cross-cultural notions in psychology, as first articulated by the likes of Hofstede (1980) and Markus and Kitayama (1991), and since explored in hundreds of studies (Taras et al., 2012). Such work suggests that people in the West tend to view themselves primarily as autonomous atomistic units, whereas those in Eastern cultures prioritise group identities and goals. That said, this distinction may be the latest incarnation of the problematic 'East-West' orientalising discourse identified by Said (2014).

In that respect, it homogenises and obscures myriad differences at a local level, overlooking the possibility that 'the East' possesses its own strains of individualism, while 'the West' has its own collectivist traditions, as well as cultures that place more emphasis on communality, like Scandinavia (Hyyppä & Mäki, 2003). Nevertheless, individualism in Western cultures is generally seen as a problem – for instance, being associated with poor outcomes on various health and wellbeing metrics (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011) – and moreover one which may be worsening (Putnam, 1995). Furthermore, from a critical perspective, such individualism has influenced academia itself, leading to models of wellbeing that downplay the importance of social bonds, and neglecting the notion that wellbeing is to an extent a social phenomenon (Lomas, 2015). As such, the analysis provided by this category offers a useful corrective, and enriches our conceptual vocabulary in this area.

Eco-Connection

In addition to *love* and *prosociality*, the updated analysis of the lexicography generated two new categories of importance with respect to relationships. The first is the quality and strength of our connection to the natural world, labelled under the rubric '*eco-connection*' (Lomas, 2019b), the first of the new categories to have its analysis
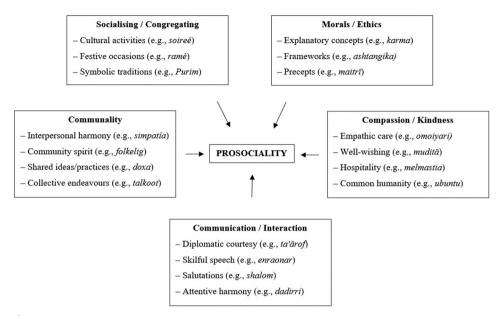
Figure 7. Pro-sociality

published. Three main themes were identified, as outlined in Figure 8 below. The first theme recognises that throughout history humans have regarded nature as sacred in various ways, including through perspectives referred to as animism, polytheism, and pan(en)theism. The second theme encompasses the diverse ways in which people see themselves as connected to nature, including being intertwined with it, rooted in it, and longing for it. Finally, the third theme articulates modes of appreciation for nature, including acts of savouring, sensitivity to its details, and an attention to aesthetics. One significant aspect to this analysis is that, as with *prosociality*, Western industrialised nations are seen as generally lacking appreciation and understanding of the importance of *eco-connection* (i.e., having a poor relationship with nature). Over recent centuries,

numerous cultures – particularly more industrialised and/or Western ones – have become dominated by predatory, disconnected modes of interaction with nature, in which it tends to be constructed as a resource to be exploited (rather than a commonwealth to be protected) (Monbiot, 2017). Moreover, it is thought that this mode of interaction has contributed to the unfolding climate crisis (Carmichael, 2019). As such, paying better attention to how we can more sustainably interact with nature will be essential in the years ahead, not only in psychology, but in the culture at large.

Aesthetics

The new analysis also pointed towards the importance of *aesthetics*. Although not easy to categorise, this
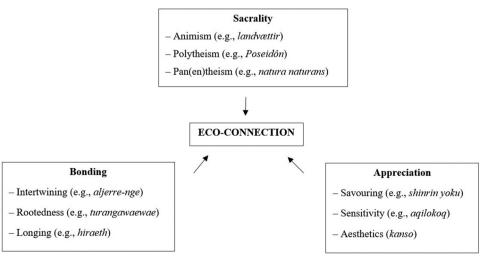
Figure 8. Eco-connection

phenomenon is included within the meta-category of relationships, since it pertains to the quality of one's interaction with the world around. Here, six main themes emerged, as illustrated below in Figure 9. As with many other categories and themes here, *aesthetics* has perhaps not had the attention it merits from fields such as PP (and psychology in general). Indeed, the value to wellbeing of art more broadly has similarly been somewhat overlooked, being mainly discussed only in relation to clinical issues in the context of various forms of art therapy (Malchiodi, 2011). However, as I articulated in a review (Lomas, 2016a), art is an exemplary vehicle for promoting flourishing more widely. This can occur in various ways, including helping people make sense of their lives, providing enriching experiences, as a form of entertainment, as a potent bonding mechanism, and via elevation through aesthetic appreciation. With the exception of the more instrumental dynamics of that review (e.g., bonding), many of those processes are encompassed within this present category. And again, untranslatable words can help enrich our understanding and appreciation of this arena. To give one example, the potential of art and aesthetics to enhance flourishing has received particular attention in Japan, where cultural forms like Zen have harnessed such phenomena in transformative and profound ways (Lomas et al., 2017). For instance, in Zen, art is seen as an especially potent way of expressing, communicating, and encouraging the perception of spiritual truths, far more so than discursive prose (Hisamatsu, 1971). As such, as with the other categories here, psychology may be considerably enriched by engaging with the insights from other cultures, as expressed in their untranslatable words.

Character

We now move into the third and final meta-category, personal development. Initial analysis of this (in Lomas, 2016b) revealed two categories: *character* and *spirituality*. The former does not refer to character in the sense of personality (i.e., personal characteristics), but rather in the sense of morals and virtues (i.e., being of 'good' character). In this respect, five themes were identified, as shown below in Figure 10, and articulated in Lomas (2019c). Together, these themes might be regarded as the dynamics by which one may manage to attain good character. Proceeding clockwise from the first theme (which denotes the possibility of good character per se), considerateness explains *why* one would want to attain it, wisdom covers knowing *how* to, agency addresses the issue of *managing* to, and skill reflects the outcome of having thus attained it. The topic of character has long been of interest to psychology, and has become even more prominent through initiatives like the Values-in-Action (VIA) taxonomy of character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These are 'positive traits that a person owns, celebrates, and frequently uses' (p. 29), and their strategic deployment and development has been linked to wellbeing in various ways (Niemiec, 2017). Notably, the VIA has a cross-cultural origin, in that researchers identified the 24 strengths by ascertaining those which appeared to be valued
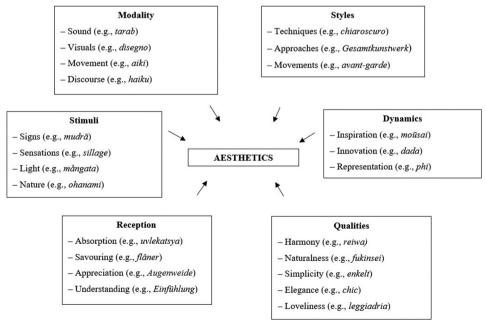

Modality
– Sound (e.g., *tarab*)
– Visuals (e.g., *disegno*)
– Movement (e.g., *aiki*)
– Discourse (e.g., *haiku*)

Styles
– Techniques (e.g., *chiaroscuro*)
– Approaches (e.g., *Gesamtkunstwerk*)
– Movements (e.g., *avant-garde*)

Stimuli
– Signs (e.g., *mudrā*)
– Sensations (e.g., *sillage*)
– Light (e.g., *mångata*)
– Nature (e.g., *ohanami*)

AESTHETICS

Dynamics
– Inspiration (e.g., *moūsai*)
– Innovation (e.g., *dada*)
– Representation (e.g., *phi*)

Reception
– Absorption (e.g., *uvlekatsya*)
– Savouring (e.g., *flâner*)
– Appreciation (e.g., *Augenweide*)
– Understanding (e.g., *Einfühlung*)

Qualities
– Harmony (e.g., *reiwa*)
– Naturalness (e.g., *fukinsei*)
– Simplicity (e.g., *enkelt*)
– Elegance (e.g., *chic*)
– Loveliness (e.g., *leggiadria*)

Figure 9. Aesthetics

universally across diverse moral and religious traditions (including Athenian philosophy, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Taoism). However, there is also merit in exploring character-related constructs that have *not* necessarily been widely valorised, but are potentially unique to certain cultures, and yet may nevertheless still be of relevance to wellbeing.

Spirituality

The second category within personal development is the notion of *spirituality* (Lomas, 2019a). The topic is somewhat opaque, since the question of what 'spirituality' refers to is fairly contested (even more so than other categories here). For instance, until relatively recently, it was inextricably intertwined with religion (and indeed for many people still is). However, with the claim of religion waning in numerous places, increasing numbers of people describe themselves as 'spiritual but not religious' – as much as one third of the US population in a recent survey, for example (Kosmin & Keysar, 2013). In that respect, most contemporary definitions of spirituality do not necessitate a religious tradition or institution, as reflected in Koenig's (2009) description of it as 'something individuals define for themselves that is largely free of the rules, regulations and responsibilities associated with religion' (p. 281). In the analysis here, three main themes were identified, as illustrated below in Figure 11. Within these themes there is considerable variation, including in relation to how the sacred is conceived, or the myriad practices developed to 'access' it.

As such, once again the value of exploring untranslatable words to understand cross-cultural diversity is evident. However, even amidst such diversity, one can identify common or even relatively 'universal' patterns. In that respect, the analysis suggested that across the great variety of spiritual traditions there was sufficient common ground to arrive at a broad conception of spirituality that mostly holds across these different contexts: engagement with the sacred, usually through contemplative practices, with the ultimate aim of self-transcendence.

Competence

Besides *character* and *spirituality*, with the addition of new words to the lexicography, two further categories have subsequently been identified in relation to development: *competence* and *understanding*. The former overlaps with the theme of skill in the category of *character*, as featured above. Indeed, in the original analysis, words relating to competence were contained entirely within that theme. However, with the evolution of the project, many more such words have been identified. These have 'overflowed' the theme of skill – which relates specifically to enactment of good character – to such an extent that they have given rise to an entire category of *competence*. In this respect, four main themes emerged, as outlined in Figure 12 below. This category relates to various constructs and areas of research that have been identified as integral to wellbeing, including mastery and coping. Mastery, for instance, is one of the six dimensions of eudaimonic
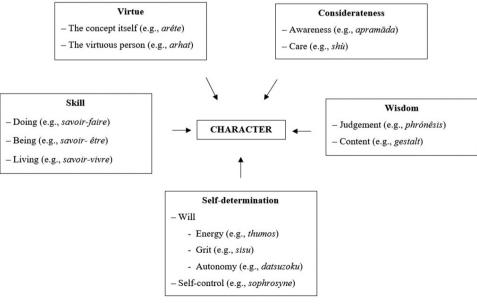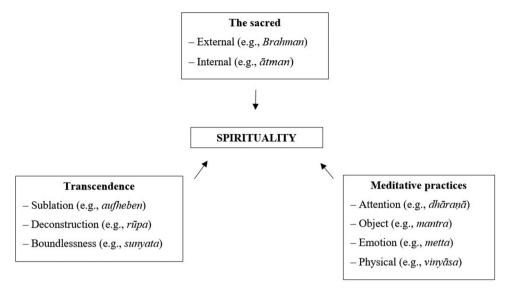
Figure 10. Character

Figure 11. Spirituality

wellbeing identified by Ryff (1989), and refers to people's ability to successfully manage their lives and the social and physical environments in which they live and act. Likewise, the vast literature on coping includes analysis of people's capacity to successfully navigate and deal with life's challenges (Carver et al., 1989). Clearly, such constructs go beyond the remit of the character-related subtheme of skill, and warrant a category of their own. The analysis here now includes a wealth of words related to such constructs, as well as to capacities that may be less instrumentally-useful, but which are nevertheless relevant to wellbeing, such as artistic talents and pursuits.

Understanding

The second additional category within the meta-category of development – and the twelfth and final category identified in the updated analysis – is that of *understanding*. This intersects to an extent with the category of *cognition* outlined above. However, that is more focused on individual psychological dynamics and processes that underpin the experience of qualia. By contrast, this present category pertains more to qualities such as wisdom and knowledge, and to arenas of thought such as philosophy, metaphysics, and episte-mology. These endeavours are to an extent shared cultural accomplishments, acquired and developed socially. One might note some overlap here with the theme of wisdom in the category of *character*; however, as with the case of *competence* above, words relating to wisdom have now considerably overflowed the remit of that narrow theme, meriting their own category. Here the analysis identified four main themes, as illustrated

below in Figure 13. Again, much may be gained from studying untranslatable words in this respect, and from cross-cultural exploration more generally. Western culture of course has a very rich and deep history of philo-sophical thought, and traditions of wisdom and contemplation, much of which with direct relevance to questions of wellbeing and the good life. However, such is the influence of these canons that fields like psychol-ogy rarely consider other cultural resources. In PP for instance, classical Greek thinkers are cited heavily, parti-cularly Aristotle (Jorgensen & Nafstad, 2004). By contrast, other founts of wisdom and knowledge are seldom drawn upon. This is perhaps now beginning to change with respect to Eastern traditions, given the burgeoning interest in Eastern-derived practices such as mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). However, other arenas remain largely overlooked, such as the great African schools of philo-sophical and religious thinking (Brown, 2004). Just as psychology has become enriched through engaging with Greek and more recently Eastern ideas, surely it would likewise do so by studying other non-Western cultural sources.

Conclusion

The analysis above has sought to highlight the value of psychology - and PP specifically - engaging in greater cross-cultural scholarship, in this case by studying untranslatable words. The basis of this claim is that the field is limited in its understanding of its subject matter by virtue of its Western-centricity, and more specifically its English-centricity. As decades of research into the linguistic relativity hypothesis have shown, people's experience and understanding of life is significantly
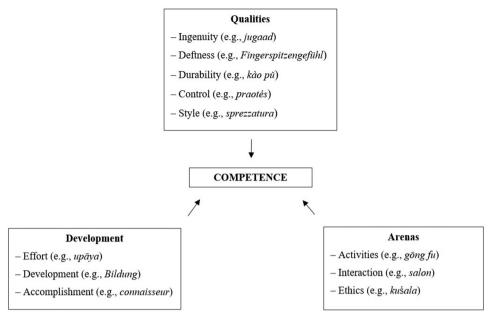
Qualities
– Ingenuity (e.g., *jugaad*)
– Deftness (e.g., *Fingerspitzengefühl*)
– Durability (e.g., *kào pǔ*)
– Control (e.g., *praotés*)
– Style (e.g., *sprezzatura*)

COMPETENCE

Development
– Effort (e.g., *upāya*)
– Development (e.g., *Bildung*)
– Accomplishment (e.g., *connaisseur*)

Arenas
– Activities (e.g., *gōng fu*)
– Interaction (e.g., *salon*)
– Ethics (e.g., *kuśala*)

Figure 12. Competence

Forms
– Experiential (e.g., *satori*)
– Initiate (e.g., *gnôsis*)
– Pragmatic (e.g., *phrónēsis*)
– Communal (e.g., *pashtunwali*)
– Holistic (e.g., *ogarniać*)
– Philosophical (e.g., *sophia*)
– Theoretical (e.g., *theōria*)
– Empirical (e.g., *epistēmē*)

Existence
– Being (e.g., *Dasein*)
– Order (e.g., *logos*)
– Truth (e.g., *alethéia*)
– Obscurity (e.g., *powehi*)
– Epochs (e.g., *Achsenzeit*)

UNDERSTANDING

Processes
– Discussion (e.g., *tertulia*)
– Study (e.g., *khavruta*)
– Analysis (e.g., *shingyoso*)
– Communality (e.g., *agora*)
– Contemplation (e.g., *beschaulich*)
– Acceptance (e.g., *Gelassenheit*)
– Experience (e.g., *etterpåklokskap*)
– Intuition (e.g., *nunchi*)

Qualities
– Fairness (e.g., *maat*)
– Depth (e.g., *vipassanā*)
– Timing (e.g., *kairos*)
– Open-minded (e.g., *víðsýni*)
– Meaning (e.g., *différance*)
– Accuracy (e.g., *merytoryczny*)
– Balance (e.g., *lagom*)
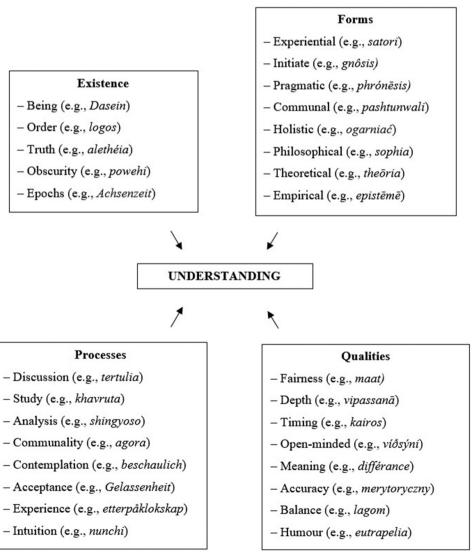– Humour (e.g., *eutrapelia*)

Figure 13. Understanding

shaped by their language (and culture more generally). Crucially, this shaping applies to academic psychology, of which English is the dominant mode of discourse. Thus, the field's conceptualisation and knowledge of its subject matter is conditioned and limited by the nature of English itself. So, for instance, phenomena that have not been lexicalised in English – i.e., untranslatable words – tend not to be a focus of concern, or even awareness, in the field. And to the extent that such phenomena are relevant to psychology, then the field's understanding is incomplete. To that end, this paper has made the case that such omissions can be redressed through studying untranslatable words. Such words can help refine the nomological network – or 'map' – of concepts in the field.

In the case of my ongoing lexicographic project – of which this paper offers an overarching summary of its current state – the focus is on mapping wellbeing specifically. In that respect, the analysis as it stands has led to the identification of three meta-categories, each of which now features four categories (which in themselves comprise numerous themes). The first meta-category is qualia, which includes *positive feelings* (Lomas, 2017a), *ambivalent feelings* (Lomas, 2017b), and now – in the updated iteration of the analysis, with over 1,400 new words added to the lexicography since my initial analysis (Lomas, 2016b) – also *cognition* and *embodiment*. The second is relationships, featuring *love* (Lomas, 2018c), *prosociality* (Lomas, 2018b), and now also *eco-connection* (Lomas, 2019b) and *aesthetics*. And the third is personal development, comprising *character* (Lomas, 2019c), *spirituality* (Lomas, 2019a), and now also *competence* and *understanding*. Together, these categories might be regarded as a provisional map – subject to revision as the project develops further over time – of the main dimensions of wellbeing.

That said, as alluded to in the caveat in the previous sentence, this map cannot yet be regarded as comprehensive or complete. The lexicography as it stands remains partial and a work-in progress, given that it currently only features 148 languages, out of some 7,000 in existence. There are thus likely to be many relevant terms that have not yet been identified by the project. Indeed, with so many languages, it is unlikely that one research project could study them all and retrieve their relevant words. Nevertheless, even if the project is an incomplete work-in-progress, one may still usefully analyse its existing words and emergent themes, even if such analyses are partial and subject to revision. Moreover, plans are in place to continue to develop the project – as discussed below – which will mean it carries on expanding its scope and coverage. However, there are also other issues beside this one of

incompleteness. For instance, of the words that *have* been included so far, their analysis is inevitably limited and non-exhaustive. Given that translation is a problematic exercise, it will not have been possible to arrive at definitions that would satisfy all speakers of the donor language. Given the fluidity and complexity of language use, there are always many ways of interpreting a given word. Thus, the descriptions and definitions articulated in the project are merely one way of elucidating its words, and ultimately are based on my interpretation of the source material. That said, dictionaries and scholarly sources were consulted in the aim of arriving at valid descriptions. As such, overall, even without being 'complete' or flawless, the project still sheds further light on wellbeing, highlighting nuances and complexities that may be missing from accounts that are only in English.

It will nevertheless be important to develop the project further over the years ahead. In that respect, there are numerous possible avenues of exploration. For instance, it would be worth undertaking detailed qualitative analyses of specific words and linguacultures. This could include in-depth interviews with bilingual speakers, aimed at identifying and exploring relevant words in the interviewee's native language(s). Interviews could discuss these words in depth, including their etymology, cultural significance, and use in context. Such analyses could be augmented by ethnographic and anthropological studies of particular cultures, which would provide insights into the larger meaning-making contexts in which the untranslatable terms are situated. Of course, this would not require Western academics 'objectively' studying these contexts from a supposed position of outside expertise. Scholars and other informed individuals from these cultures could (and should) be invited to collaborate in these enquiries in a spirit of co-production (Maclean & Cullen, 2009).

In addition to such qualitative endeavours, quantitative analyses of constructs would be valuable, particularly using factor-analysis (e.g., to examine their internal structure). Such exploration is exemplified by Scheibe et al. (2007), who constructed a 28-item scale to assess the notion of *Sehnsucht*, a German term explained roughly as a predilection for longing. Their research – in German, and on a German population – suggested it comprised six dimensions: (a) utopian conceptions of an ideal path of life development; (b) a sense of life's incompleteness and imperfection; (c) a conjoint focus on the past, present, and future; (d) ambivalent, bittersweet emotions; (e) deep reflections on life; and (f) a mental world imbued with symbolic richness. It

would be instructive to explore the extent to which non-German people share similar tendencies towards this state, perhaps by developing versions of the questionnaire in other languages (although, of course, translating scales introduces its own complexities). Comparable analyses, including the development of other such scales, could be undertaken with other words. These analyses would also enable assessment of how such words sit in relation to existing psychological concepts.

Finally, there is the potential for applied forms of research, including the development of interventions to help people engage with untranslatable words (and the phenomena these signify). For instance, the Pāli term *sati* is the basis for the contemporary Buddhist-derived notion of 'mindfulness' (Lomas, 2017c). Over recent years, a wealth of therapeutic activities and interventions have been created to help people experience and cultivate this state (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). It is possible that similar endeavours could be undertaken with other such words, although these efforts would of course be subject to the same challenges and complexities as have been faced in relation to *sati*. For instance, words derive their meaning from dynamics including: their situatedness within the network of other concepts in that language (the key insight of structuralism and post-structuralism); the values and traditions in the culture that created the language; and their experiential use in context. As such, words cannot simply be 'transplanted' from one cultural context to another, and/or from one time period to another, without important elements being lost or skewed. For instance, in its original context, *sati* featured ethical and spiritual connotations that formulated as mindfulness in the context of 20th century USA (Lomas, 2017c). However, that does not mean such attempts at engagement are futile or meaningless. Clearly, much has been gained by psychology – and the world at large – from the contemporary interest in mindfulness. This lesson arguably applies to all aspects of the lexicography. Thus, overall, the field has much to learn and gain from engaging with untranslatable words, and more generally in cultivating greater cross-cultural sensitivity and appreciation.

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ORCID

Tim Lomas http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9458-6185

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