

Eliza Kitis

Department of English
Aristotle University, Thessaloniki

EMOTIONS AS DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTS: THE CASE OF THE PSYCH-VERB ‘FEAR’

Abstract: In this paper, I concentrate on emotion predicates (*fear* psych-verbs) and trace back their original meanings to the domain of action (motion) rather than emotion. I show that emotional meanings are initially parasitic on actional predicates denoting external behaviour, whose senses gradually give way to emotional meanings as causative constructions give way to non-causative ones. In this sense, emotion meanings can be seen as outgrowths of action or motion meanings. Moreover, emotion predicates examined here are shown to have developed various syntactic constructions utilized in discourse to express not just emotions, but also a variety of cognitive functions approximating other cognitively weighted verbs of thinking, etc., and specific speech acts.

The findings of this study may have implications for Wierzbicka’s research. If the original meanings of emotion verbs are to be found in their initial uses to signify motion rather than emotion, how can we claim that certain configurations of assumed universal cognitive cross-cultural concepts, such as ‘think’ and ‘feel’, will yield the emotion concepts encoded in lexemes *fear* and *afraid*? Besides, at which stage can we sever these lexical items (and/or their corresponding concepts) from their evolutionary course and, hence, from their variability of meaning and functions? Moreover, using conceptual primitives may go some way towards constructing a semantic analysis, but leaves off exactly where language takes over, i.e., when language is put to use. I show that emotion terms have multifunctionality in discourse, which remains unaccounted for in Wierzbicka’s theory. Emotions in this perspective can be seen as discursive constructs reflecting institutionalized evolutionary processes. In effect, this paper presents evidence for the need to merge the cognitive with the functional aspects of language.*

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1. Introduction

In enumerating the reasons for the neglect of particles in modern linguistics, Wierzbicka (1986: 520) blames it partly on the a-semantic, a-pragmatic orientation of much of modern linguistics which was “purposefully divorced from real-life communication involving full-blooded human beings (rather than automata), in an atmosphere when supreme value was placed on keeping apart ‘language structure’ and ‘language use’ ”; and adds, resonating Mey (1986), that language is after all SOMEBODY’S language and that its structure, not only reflects, but is also shaped by its users and their needs.

In this paper, I would like to follow up on this remark by Wierzbicka and examine *fear* constructions, not so much as expressing emotion, but rather as discursive constructions used in everyday speech to perform various speech acts. The findings will have implications for Wierzbicka’s (1999) claims regarding her programme of setting up definitional criteria of presumed universal applicability for emotion predicates across languages.

In this study, we will examine the interrelation between feelings, thoughts, and their utilization in the pragmatic domain of interpersonal meaning by examining *fear* predicates in English and Greek (*fear*, *afraid* for English, and *fovume* for Greek). After a classification of emotion verbs, we will trace briefly the evolutionary route of the *fear* predicates in Greek and English, noting their parallel morphosyntactic and semantic courses, and see how they came to be used as distinct constructions in mundane situations, not so much to express emotion, but rather to express thoughts and, ultimately, couch speech acts that might otherwise ‘injure’ (Butler 1995) the face of the addressee, or even to sanction or ratify specific speech acts that otherwise would not be clarified, perceived and taken up as such. In fact, they can be seen as assuming performativity. It will then become clear that Wierzbicka’s analysis of the emotion of fear can be seen as only basically definitional, leaving a great deal to be desired in terms of the actual predicate’s use in various structures functioning as discursive constructs in social situations.

2. Classification of emotion verbs

In recent years, scholars have been much intrigued by verbs of emotion or psychological states. This focus in linguistics ties in with burgeoning research in the field of emotions, cognition and, generally, consciousness, in the field of philosophy and cognitive science. Most of the literature on emotions analyzed linguistically is encountered in the field of lexical semantics bordering on syntax, as it is widely acknowledged that lexical structure affects syntactic configuration. (cf. Tenny and Pustejovsky 1999, among others). Within this field, verbs denoting emotion are usually called psychological (psych) verbs. The class of such verbs denoting emotions like fear, anger, hate, love, etc. is commensurate with the class of psych-verbs (fig. 1, A). In a broader interpretation, the category of psych-verbs also includes sub-classes of perception verbs (*hear, see, feel*, etc.), cognitive verbs (*think, believe*, etc.), and also evaluation verbs (*estimate, appreciate*, etc.) (Fig. 1, B) (Klein and Kutscher 2005):

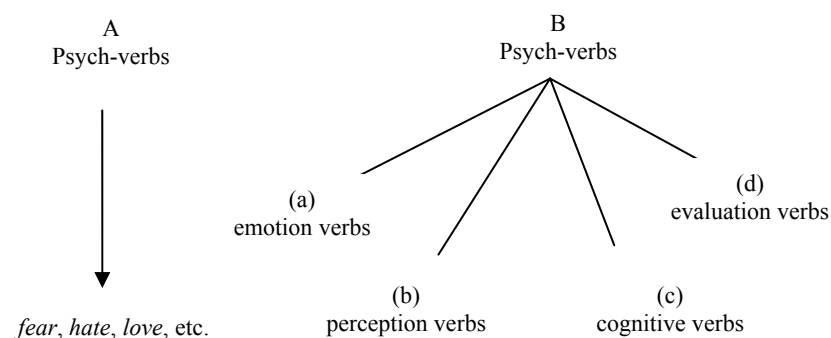


Fig. 1. The class of psych-verbs

Fear predicates are clearly emotion predicates since fear is one of the basic emotions. However, it has also been claimed (Kakouriotis and Kitis 1999; Kitis forthcoming; Tissari 2007) that emotion predicates such as *fear, be afraid*, in English and in Greek, have developed meanings beyond those of emotion. They have evolved into cognitive verbs of thought that are further utilized to express interpersonal meanings. These *fear* predicates have, moreover, spanned across domains, evolving from the semantic domain to the pragmatic domain of functions. *Fear* predicates provide evidence that there is a consistent and

unidirectional evolution from emotion verbs (a) to cognitive verbs (c), and, further, to evaluation verbs (d) (fig. 1). This is not the whole story as these cognitive emotion meanings, originating from action meanings, are capitalized upon in the social domain to enact specific speech acts. In fact, it can be claimed that emotion verbs are a source of thought verbs and, further, of performative verbs. This route is unidirectional rather than bidirectional as Vender (1972) has argued (cf. Kakouriotis and Kitis 1999; Kitis forthcoming). In the next section, I will present Wierzbicka's analysis of the two main *fear* concepts.

3. Wierzbicka's emotion concepts of *fear*

A major focus of Wierzbicka's work in semantics has been the organization of knowledge domains in the human mind and their lexicalization in specific languages. More specifically, she set up a kind of presumably universal semantic alphabet consisting of indefinable primitives, the atoms of human thought, called Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), various configurations of which can yield the semantic meaning of sets of words (corresponding to concepts) in specific languages (1996). Wierzbicka has implemented this method of semantic analysis in emotion words as well, claiming that NSM is a stabilizing factor in this respect across cultures and languages (1990, 1994, and 1999).

According to Wierzbicka (1990, 1999) the cognitive scenarios corresponding to the emotion concept of *fear* and *afraid* are as follows:

Fear (X felt fear)

- (a) X felt something because X thought something.
- (b) sometimes a person thinks:
- (c) "I don't know what will happen
- (d) some bad things can happen
- (e) I don't want these things to happen
- (f) I want to do something because of this if I can
- (g) I don't know if I can do anything"
- (h) when this person thinks this this person feels something bad
- (i) X felt like this
- (j) because X thought something like this

Afraid (X was afraid)

- (a) X felt something because X thought something
- (b) sometimes a person thinks about something:
- (c) "something bad can happen to me because of this

- (d) I don't want this to happen
- (e) I don't know if I can do anything now"
- (f) when this person thinks this this person feels something bad
- (g) X felt like this
- (h) Because X thought something like this

(Wierzbicka 1999: 75)

In the next section we will briefly trace back the evolutionary courses of these *fear* predicates in both English and Greek, using the Perseus corpus of Ancient Greek (AG) texts for Greek. The translational equivalent of both *fear* and *afraid* in Greek is *fovume*. I will then present the implications of my findings for Wierzbicka's cognitive scenarios of these two predicates.

4. The evolution of *fear* predicates

4.1. The evolution of 'fovume' in Greek¹

As has been argued in Kitis (forthcoming), the psychological Modern Greek (MG) verb *fovume* has its roots in the AG transitive causative verb of action *phobeō* meaning 'to put to flight', 'to strike with fear', 'to terrify, frighten, alarm', linked to its cognate object, the noun *phobos*.² While AG verbs ending in *-eō* are mainly intransitive, *phobeō* belongs to a small group of verbs with this

¹ I regard as translational counterparts those terms which occur more frequently as their translational equivalents and appear first in dictionaries: *fear* = *fovos*, *tromos*, etc.; *afraid* = *fovismenos*, etc., *be afraid* = *fovame* (Penguin-Hellenews English-Greek Dictionary, 1975); *fovos* = fear, fright, dread, anxiety; *fovume* = be afraid, be fearful, be/stand in fear of, etc. (Stavropoulos, 1988, Oxford Greek-English Learner's Dictionary, OUP). There are two morphological versions of the predicate: *fovame* and *fovume*, the latter being closer to its Ancient Greek equivalent form.

² *phobeō*; aor. *(e)phobēsa*; mid. pres. part. *phobeumenos*; fut. *phobēsomai*; pass. aor. 3 pl. *(e)phobēthen*; perf. part. *pephobēmenos*; plup. 3 pl. *pephobēato*: Act. 'put to flight', *tina* (=one)-3 sl.; mid. and pass., 'flee, be put to flight', *hupo tinos* or *hupo tini* (=by one); *tina*. Various forms such as *phobēsō*, *ephobēsa* go back to a period when the present was either *phobēmi* or *phobēō* (Monro 2000: 114). The noun *phobos* is assumed to derive from the verb *phobomai*. Transliteration key for AG (different from that for MG, the first sign is in AG, the second in transliteration, if a third, it is for pronunciation): β/b=v. φ/ph=f, ω/ō =o (long), η/ê=i (long), υ/u, θ/the=the (as in 'thing'), γ=g, δ/d=the (as in 'they'), ξ/x=ks, ψ=ps, χ=ch, as in Perseus. Breathings are not reflected. Underlining in examples reflects exact lexical correspondences. All AG examples derive from the Perseus corpus. Translations derive also from Perseus, but in some cases have been adapted to reflect more precisely the original structure and wording.

suffix that are causative (Monro 2000: 56). This AG verb denoted movement away from a source, either by force or due to fear as in (1) and (2):

1. *ou men gar nun prôta podôkeos ant' Achilêos stêsomai, all' êdê me kai allote douri phobêsen ex Idês...* (Homer, *Iliad* book 20, 1.58)
'Not now for the first time shall I stand forth against swift-footed Achilles; nay, once ere now he drove me with his spear from Ida.'
2. *ê mala dê kakotechnos amêchane sos dolos Hêrê Hektora dion epause machês, ephobêse de laous.* (Homer, *Iliad* book 15, 1.34)
'that art hard to deal with, it is the craft of thine evil wiles that hath stayed goodly Hector from the fight, and hath driven the people in rout.'

Also in Homer, we encounter the passive, rather poetic, form of the verb *phebomai*, meaning 'to be put to flight', 'to flee in terror', but only in the present tense and imperfective aspect.

3. *hôs Danaoi Trôas menon empedon oude phebonto.* (*Iliad* 3.31, book 5)
'even so the Danaans withstood the Trojans steadfastly, and fled not (were not driven away).'

As noted in Kitis (forthcoming), the verb in Homer always denoted the action of fleeing away (not the emotion of fear). However, it is reasonable to assume that the thematic object denoting the affected (the object of the causative transitive verb, or the subject of the passivized form) also came to be the experiencer object in the sense that the affected (patient) also experienced the emotion of fear -world knowledge tells us that compulsory fleeing away is connected to fear (LeDoux 1996).

In later AG texts, however, the verb develops a middle form, *phoubomai*, in which the internal thematic object of the causative verb *phobêô*, meaning 'putting to flight', takes up the position of the subject of this middle verb (external theme as experiencer subject in the nominative). In fact, the former internal thematic object of the causative verb now becomes the external theme or nominative subject of the middle form verb. Apparently, this is due to a shift of focus from the causer or the agent of the action to the affected or experiencer object, which becomes the theme of the discourse. An experiencer subject in-the-nominative theme can be the topic of the discourse or the theme of the sentence as it is external to the structure, while an internal thematic object cannot. This specific shift may have been motivated by a more general shift in the discourse of the time from total concentration on descriptive accounts to accounts that also focus on more abstract domains of motives,

fears, emotions and views of the characters. The following example from Thucydides is in the present perfect form of the middle verb *phoboumai* (as evolved from the causative transitive *phobeō*), and selects an object in the accusative as signifying the cause of the anxiety. The experiencer is the ellipted 'I' morphologically marked in the suffix of the verb.

4. *mallon gar pephobēmai tas oikeias hēmōn hamartias ē tas tōn enantiōn dianoiās.* (Thuc. 2.37)
 'I rather (have) fear(ed) more our mistakes than the enemies' thoughts' (what they're up to).

Not only did *phobeō* mean 'to put to flight' in the early AG texts (Homer), i.e., it selected an internal theme in object position as the afflicted party (patient), but also the noun *Phobos* 'fear' was originally the name of a mythical demigod, the son of the god of war, Ares, who drove people away. So the mutation from transitivity to middle form, applies to the noun *phobos* (*fovos* in MG), a cognate object noun (*phoboumai phobous aischrous* 'I fear nasty fears', Plato, *Protagoras* 360b), which in MG signifies the emotion of fear felt by the experiencer. In (5) we see an example from Homer's *Iliad*, where *Phobos* is a proper name denoting the dear son of Ares, who was valiant and 'turned to flight' (*ephobēse*) warriors.

5. *hoios de brotoloigos Arēs polemon de meteisi, tōi de Phobos philos huios hama krateros kai atarbēs hespeto, hos t' ephobēse talaphrona per polemistēn:* (Il. Book 13, 1.40)
 'And even as Ares, the bane of mortals, goeth forth to war, and with him followeth Rout [Fear], his son, valiant alike and fearless [=atarbēs], that turneth to flight a warrior'.

In fact (5) exhibits a metaphor whereby a specific individual carries out an action that ultimately is understood as causing the emotion of fear. It is a matter for further study to what extent emotion is represented in concrete terms (metonymized and metaphorized in action predicates and concrete entities for qualities) in very early Ancient Greek texts, in a culture where virtue and vice, as well as all emotions are conceptualized in the form of goddesses or demigoddesses, nymphs or muses.

Once the causative construction gave rise to a non-causative one in middle form, we witness the development of various syntactic structures the verb *phoboumai* enters into. It can select an object accusative as the source of anxiety (4), often followed by an *hoti*-causal clause (cf. Kitis forthcoming), or an infinitival complementizer (6), or a *mē*- 'lest'-complement clause (*phoboumai*

mê ou genêtai ‘I fear that it may not happen’),³ all versions of these structures having equivalents in MG, used as distinct discourse constructions with distinct, even if related, functions.

6. *egô men gar phoboumai sophistas phanai.* (Plato, *Sophist* 3.52)
‘For I fear/hesitate to declare (make known) them (as) sophists’

4.2. The evolution of ‘fear’ and ‘be afraid’ in English

Just like the AG *phobeô*, *fear* was originally a causative verb meaning ‘to drive away by fear’, ‘to scare away’. Apparently, the emotion of fear was a resulting state of an action verb, as the following example testifies:

7. *Here Bugles boldely for to blowe, To fere the beestis.* (c1400 *Sowdone Bab.* 59)⁴

In Shakespeare, *fear* retains its causative meaning – listed first in Crystal and Crystal (2002) – together with its current meaning:

8. *Warwick was a bug that feared us all.* (*Antony&Cleop.* II.vi.24) (Crystal and Crystal, 2002)

In this agentive form, *fear* also acquired the meaning of deterring one from a course of action:

9. *He doth...fear us from putting any confidence in our own works.* (1531 FRITH *Judgm. Tracy* 251)

Like the AG *phobomai*, it is also encountered in the passive form:

10. *A Swallow flew about his head and could not be feared from him.* (1614 RALEIGH *Hist. World* II. IV. ii. §7. 152)

Just like its AG counterpart, *fear* soon turned from a causative verb (with its external theme in maximal agentive position, as in (7) and (8), Dowty 1991) to

³ This is a complementizer that can be selected by verbs of fearing or by apprehension epistemic (Goodwin 1989; Lichtenberk 1995).

⁴ All following examples in this section are from OED, unless otherwise specified.

a reflexive one with the meaning of 'to be afraid' (11), or 'doubt' (12) from Shakespeare, a form that is obsolete nowadays.

11. *I fear me he is slain.* (1590 MARLOWE *Edw.* II, II. Iv)
12. *Fear you not her courage.* (*Hamlet* III.iv.7) (Crystal and Crystal 2002)

The reflexive form is soon dropped and *fear* develops various meaning nuances in various constructions. Over time, its external thematic subject-nominative position comes to be occupied by the experiencer rather than the agent. As for its internal theme in object position, it can be seen as the stimulus or target of the emotion. So agentive causative frames with the experiencer in object position as in (13) appear almost at the same time as expletive constructions (14), and as frames with the experiencer in external thematic subject position (*They*, 15):

13. *He feareth me above all the men lyvyng.* (1530 PALSGR. 547/2)
14. *It fereth me sore for to endyte.* (1503 HAWES *Examp. Virt. Prol.* 2)
15. *They feared not the enemy, but the narrownes of the wais.* (1563 GOLDING *Cæsar* 30b)

Later, selecting a *to*-infinite, the verb acquires the meaning of hesitating to do something, fearing the consequences. In this sense it approximates a cognitive state verb expressing an intentional mental state, rather than just an emotion, as (16) shows even though emotion can be caused by entertaining intentional mental states (thoughts) (cf. Theodoropoulou 2004):

16. *As if he feared to attediate..us.* (1603 FLORIO *Montaigne* 563)

This use is a current one, too. While a *to*-infinite necessarily sets the time of the complement-event posterior to that of the main, *fear* also selects a *that*-clause, which does not restrict time setting of the clausal predicate (17).

17. *I feare sore that many chrysten people..do as the chyldren of Israel dyd.* (1526 *Pilgr. Perf.* (W. de W. 1531) 16b)

Since fear is considered a negative emotion (Langacker 1987: 151) it is expected that further evolutionary meanings are also judged on a negative scale. Once the psych-verb selects a *that*-complement clause, it expresses negatively assessed views and functions as an epistemic verb rather than a psych one expressing emotion (cf. Kakouriotis and Kitis 1999; Theodoropoulou 2003;

Tissari 2007). In this construction, just as in the *to*-infinitival one, we witness emotions (unintentional mental states) rubbing shoulders with thoughts (intentional mental states, Searle 1983, 2002, 2004). While, however, the *to*-infinitival structure scores more highly on the emotion scale, the *that*-construction scores more highly on the epistemic scale, with emotion often being negligible or non-descript. Theodoropoulou (2003: 302) stresses that the MG *fovume (h)oti* ‘that’ construction prioritizes the cognitive orientation of the utterance.

Turning now to the other *fear* predicate, *afraid*, it is a past participial form and as such it denotes a situation rather than an action. It initially meant ‘disturbed, alarmed, frightened from a prior state of peace’:

18. *Alle frayed he went fro that cite.* (1330 R. BRUNNE *Chron.* 323)

In Shakespeare, the verb appears as *affray*, meaning ‘startle’, ‘frighten away’, or as *affright*, meaning ‘frighten’, ‘scare’, and in adjectival form as *affrighted*, meaning ‘alarmed’, ‘frightened’ (Crystal and Crystal 2002):

19. *arm from arm that voice doth us affray* (*Romeo&Jul.* III.v.33).
 20. *Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls* (*Rich. III* V.iii.309).
 21. *th’affrighted globe / Should yawn at alteration* (*Othello* V.ii.101).
 (Crystal and Crystal 2002)

It soon came to select a *to*-infinitival complement to express apprehension of the consequences (22), and later a *that*-complementizer, which can be also omitted (23):

22. *Moses couered his face, for he was afrayed to loke vpon God.* (1535 COVERDALE *Ex.* iii. 6)
 23. *I am much afraid my Ladie his mother plaid false.* (1596 SHAKES. *Merch.* V. I. ii. 47)

Both *fear* and *afraid* came to be used as propositional attitude verbs, encoding the speaker’s attitude towards the proposition rather than any emotion, (23), (24); from that stage on, they soon developed parenthetical functions, thus promoting their complement clauses to the status of the main (25), (26), (27).

24. *I fear they are troubled with King’s evil.* (1658-9 *Burton’s Diary* (1828) IV. 47)

25. *The account..will hardly, I fear, render my letters very interesting.* (1863 F. A. KEMBLE *Resid. in Georgia* 16)
26. *Disagreeable enough (as most necessities are) but, I am afraid, unavoidable.* (1740 GRAY *Let. 16 July (1900)* I. 76)
27. *She did not like it, but I did many a thing she did not like, I'm afraid – and now she's gone!* (1853 MRS. GASKELL *Cranford* iii. 47)

We therefore witness initially a shift in the semantic meaning of the *fear* predicates from the concrete domain of action to the more abstract domain of emotion. This process is one of re-semanticization and will be discussed in the next section.

However, quite apart from the semantic meaning of emotion, these verbs, both in Greek and in English, further developed functions in the pragmatic domain of interpersonal meaning.⁵ This process is one of pragmaticization (Traugott 1989, 2003; Traugott and Dasher, 1987, 2002). These pragmatic readings are determined by their specific constructions, as we have seen (cf. Kitis forthcoming). As propositional attitude verbs or parentheticals, these verbs select a reading in the sense of 'I regret to say; I regretfully or apologetically admit, report, etc.; I suspect; I am inclined to think' (OED) (cf. Tissari), as in (28) dated 1959, and (29) from the MG corpus ILSP:

28. *It would be less kind, but true, I am afraid, to find in this book a quite invincible taste for the mediocre.* (1959 *Observer* 14 June 22/6)
29. *I apantisi, fovume, den ine ikanopiitiki*
The reply, I'm afraid not is satisfactory
'The reply, I'm afraid, is not satisfactory'

5. Action predicates acting as metonymies for the emotion

In this section, we will examine how the process of resemanticization of these predicates took place, namely how motion verbs were resemanticized as emotion verbs. I will claim that the main operation involved in this process is that of metonymization (Foucault 1966; Gibbs 1999).

⁵ In Homer the parenthetical use of *fear* verbs is served by other verbs such as *deidō*, surviving mainly in the perfective *deidoika* in later AG texts but also (and mainly) by moods, e.g., subjunctive (see Monro 2000: 254–255). Indeed, in AG we observe a gradual lexicalization of grammatical features such as mood markings in expressing subjective meanings.

Regarding *fear* predicates, we witness metonymic processes in meaning representation. We have seen how a cognate object of the AG verb is metaphorized as a war god's son. War begets fear or *Phobos* and, this feeling or perception is conveniently concretized in the received perception of its time that the war god, *Ares*, begets a son, *Phobos*.

We have seen that as far as Greek is concerned both the verb in its causative (and passive) forms, but also its cognate noun, have the actional causative meaning of effecting an action (that of driving away, or being driven away, and, consequently, scaring) in an entity, which is the affected or experiencer in object position.

Clearly, fleeing away from a point is only a stage of a more holistic scenario to which this act can be seen as belonging. We can only surmise that the AG term *phobeō*, denoting the action – and only by implication the emotion of its evolved causative object experiencer verb – or its passivized form *phobomai*, signifying the affected's behaviour originally of fleeing, came to invoke a more comprehensive scenario concerning such actions. Individual experiences involving such actions can be evoked to invest words and their denotata with enriched meaning. On the basis of the data, it is reasonable to assume that the route of meaning was one from signification of the action alone to that of the action-cum-emotion at an interim stage, and, lastly, to that of the emotion alone. In time, it apparently became the norm, probably by conventionalization of implicatures (Grice 1989; Traugott 1989; Traugott and König 1991), to use the verb to evoke metonymically the whole scenario that stands for such situations, i.e. the entire model cognitively enriched by the speaker's personal experience of such situations and the condition of the experiencer. Indeed, fleeing away would be just one stage of the cognitive model (ICM) (Lakoff 1987) humans have internalized as a standard one occurring in cases of fear. Fleeing away from danger (often just a wish, since paralyzing effects are common in conditions of immense fear) does not appear as a stage in Wierzbicka's semantic analysis of *fear* (1990, 1999, see above). But she does note that *fear* "is more likely to mobilize one to action, in particular, to make one run away from a potentially dangerous situation (although it could also have a paralyzing effect), whereas being *afraid* is more likely to stop one from doing something" (1999: 74). (Also, cf. Kövecses 1990).

But what is at the root of this resemanticization process? I submit that the resemanticization of the predicates is motivated by the human unconscious urge to blend the objective with the subjective experience (cf. Nagel's notorious question: 'What is it like to be a bat?'). Subjective feelings relate to mental states like fear, pain, etc., while objective experience relates to perceptions of the world. We don't have a clue how a bat feels or senses the surrounding world, but

we do when it comes to understanding and interpreting perceptions of outer external behaviours of similar creatures (other humans) because we can extrapolate from subjective experience. This is how we merge objective and subjective experience in understanding the surrounding world. This fact is a clear motivation for meaning enrichment then. The term signifying just the external behaviour (fleeing from a point) is first enriched to mean both the perceivable action but also to implicate the subjective experience of the entity afflicted (patient). Gradually, this added layer of meaning turns the (perceived) patient of the action to the (conceived) experiencer of the emotion, thus resemanticizing the term denoting the state.

6. From action to emotion, from the causative to the middle domain

The metonymic use of the *fear* verbs invoking the whole cognitive model of the experience (action for emotion, symptom for source) is coupled by the predicates' syntactic shift from a causative verb, initially to a passive form (as in Homer, cf. Kitis forthcoming, and example 10 for English), and later to a middle formation. Croft *et al.* (1987: 188) note that "the active, middle and passive domains are not autonomous: all three are related to each other, however distantly, through semantically intermediate uses." As the focus shifted from the agent of the action, or cause (stimulus) of the emotion, to the afflicted (patient) or the experiencer, or, in other words, as the focus of the discourse shifted from the more concrete domain of action to the more abstract esoteric cognitive domain of emotions, the experiencer entity shifted from the position of the internal thematic object to that of an external theme which possesses a higher syntactic position and can, consequently, be the topic of the discourse or a discourse theme, as we have seen. This thematic shift reflects a shift in type of force: from force exerted in the physical domain to force or cause or stimulus in the more abstract domain of cognitive or mental states. Indeed, causality in the relevant literature on these predicates is originally seen as a basic physical force that just extends to the cognitive domain (e.g. Croft 1991, 1993, 1998). The evolution of the predicates illustrates this process very clearly.

7. Parallel courses of verbs and selected prepositions

In MG, the action meaning of putting to flight is extinct for the verb *fovume*. The emotion verb *fovume* occurs only in the middle form designating emotion ‘to feel fear’, and we encounter the MG transitive form *fovizo*, meaning ‘to frighten’, (the MG denominal derivation with a MG verbal suffix) that selects an Experiencer in object position.⁶ The passivized form of AG verb *phobeō*, *ephobēthen* (see note 2), is preserved as the past perfective *foviθika* of MG *fovume*, the only form that selects the *apo*-‘from/by’ Prepositional Phrase (PP), which ordinarily signifies the agent of an action in passive forms.⁷ While *fear* predicates as experiencer-subject psych-verbs are states (Grimshaw 1990; Dowty 1991, amongst others), the past perfective *foviθika* of *fovume* is the only form of the predicate that is not characterized by stativity (quite understandably). It can be claimed that this past perfective form of *fovume*, with characteristics such as the inchoative and causative character (events) and lack of experiencer control (cf. Croft 1993), is a vestige of the original Homeric predicate testifying to its initial meaning in concrete domains and its derivational history as explained above.

As state predicates, *fear* verbs do not occur in the progressive (30) and do not license pseudo-cleft constructions perspectivizing the change of state within the event denoted by the verb (31) (see Klein and Kutscher 2002, 2005 for a review). The equivalent causative verb selecting an object experiencer occurs both in the progressive (in English, since there is no progressive in Greek) but also in pseudo-clefts:

30. **John is fearing floods.*
31. **What happened to John was that he feared the flood.*
32. *The lion is frightening John.*
33. *What happened to John was that the lion frightened him.*

Yet, while the imperfective forms of MG *fovume* follow the same pattern (34, 35), the (past) perfective form of the verb, *foviθika*, seems to be characterized by non-stative or actional features (36, 37):

⁶ For discussion and a discourse-friendly analysis of these two Greek psych-verbs see Tantos 2006. He claims that considering Greek data will impose a unified analysis of psych-verbs.

⁷ Cf. also modal perfective forms *tha/na foviθo*, which behave like the perfective form discussed here, i.e. can select an *apo*-PP. Other non-perfective forms with *apo*-PP are rare though not impossible. (Thanks to M. Makri-Tsilipakou for data).

34. ?*Fovotan oli ti mera.*⁸
feared-3sImperf whole the day.
‘S/he was afraid the whole day.’
35. **Auto pu tis sinevi itan oti fovotan.*
What that her happened was that feared-3sImperf.
36. *Fovithike jia ligo/pros stigmi/otan akuse ta nea.*
Was scared-3s/Perf for a while/for a moment/when heard-3s the news.
‘S/he was frightened for a while/for a moment/when s/he heard the news.’
37. *Auto pu tis sinevi itan oti fovithike apo to sismo.*
What that her happened-3s was that feared-3s/Perf by the
earthquake.
‘What happened to her was that she feared/got frightened by the
earthquake.’

As has been mentioned, this passive past perfective form, *fovithika* (-1person.sing.), is (with some minor exceptions) the only form of the verb that can select an *apo*-PP that ordinarily denotes the agent in passive voice. Preposition *apo* followed a similar evolutionary route to the *fear* verbs examined here, that is, it initially signified in the concrete domain (movement away from a certain point), and later developed meanings in the abstract domain (causality) as well. Similarly, we can claim that just as *fovithika* selects an *apo*-PP, English *fear* verbs select the preposition that seems to follow a route akin to the Greek preposition (e.g., 1400: *fear of*, *afraid of*).⁹ It is instructive to recall that the main preposition of agency in Old English (OE) was *from*, whose function was taken over by the preposition *of* (11th c). Fraser (1987: 246–47) writes that “*from*..., with its insistence on the initial point of the action, tends to be reserved for verbs which themselves express movement. And he adds that while, “*from* focuses on the starting point from which the verbal operation initiates, *of* underlines rather the conduction of the operation itself.” (245).

What emerges from all this is that the semantics of both *apo* and *of* converge with the semantics of original *phoboumai* (Homeric *phobomai*). Both signified

⁸ Without a complement-clause or other qualifications. The only acceptable reading would be to interpret the verb as ‘trembling’. Even if not so frequent, these constructions may occur: *Ke i Anna apose fovotan.* ‘Anna, too, was scared/afraid today’.

⁹ The diagrammatic evolution of meanings of the prepositions and their relation:
Greek: *apo*=Sanskrit: *apa*>Lat: *ab*>OE: *af*, *oef*, *of*, etc. Original sense ‘from’.
Domain of signification: *Place*>*motion*>*superficial motion*> (*similarity of the*) *cause or ground*>*of position (away from)*>*of the mind*>...>*of the cause* (L&S).
English: *of*=Old Fris.: *af*, *of*, *ofe*<Old Sax.: *afi*<MLGerm. *af*<...<OTeut.: *ada* (unaccented by-form *ab*< Sanskrit: *apa*. The primary sense of *of* was ‘away (from)’ (OED).

motion from a certain point in space. While the semantics of the verb shifted from the source domain of motion to that of emotion, the prepositions developed secondary meanings, such as those of source of cause to cause to agency. Combined with *fear* verbs, they demonstrate a shift in meanings from force in the physical domain to force in the mental domain.

8. *Fear* verb-discursive constructions

In this section, I discuss those *fear*-constructions that are used, not so much to express emotion, but rather to perform specific speech acts. As has become clear by now, *fear* verbs initially signified actions in the physical domain, these meanings gradually giving way to representations of sensation and emotion, while much later they developed concurrent functions in the domain of evaluation. So we witness a metaphoric (more specifically, metonymic) shift from the physical domain of action and sensation to the more mental domain of emotion and further to the intentional domain of evaluation. This evolution is accompanied by a concurrent evolution of *fear* verbs from signifying unintentional states of sensation and (uncontrolled) emotion to denoting intentional states of thought and evaluation.

Vender (1972), who includes *fear* together with *hope*, as emotively tinged and groups it together with *anticipate* as a ‘putative’ across the expositive *predict*, points up the “temporal connotations” of its class. The time setting of the complement clause introduced by *fear* verbs can either predate or postdate the time of the *fear* predicate. One must add that this temporal versatility and these temporal connotations are what have enabled both *fovume* and *fear* to act as predictive speech acts. It must be noted that, while in Greek *fovume* does service for both *fear* and *be afraid*, in English *fear* is used mainly for predictive speech acts, whereas *be afraid* can perform both predictive but also non-predictive speech acts:

38. *I fear that the council may not use the powers it has or is worried about the cost of an appeal..*
39. *I fear that I won't make a good father.*
40. *I am afraid that I won't be able to come.*
41. *I'm afraid that your application has been rejected.*
42. *Fovame oti den piezun tin Ankira. (ILSP)*
 I'm afraid that not pressurize-3p the Ancara.
 ‘I'm afraid that they do not pressurize Ancara’.

43. *Fovame, Kirie Ipurge, oti ehume mia ideologiki*
 I’m afraid, Mister Minister, that have-1p an ideological
epemvasi... ke fovame mipos ine proδromos
 intervention... and I’m afraid that is-3s precursor
mias megalis strofis.... (ILSP)
 a-gen.great U-turn
 ‘I’m afraid, Minister, that we witness an ideological intervention and I’m
 afraid that it might be a precursor of a significant U-turn’.

Pesetsky (1995: 56) noted that “[i]n general, a negative emotion ... entails a negative evaluation...” Indeed, we witness a parallel evolution of fear constructions ranging from signifying negative emotion, and consequently negative evaluation, to performing speech acts that have a specific impact on the world.

We witness a progression from nominal object constructions reflecting emotion to clausal complement constructions reflecting the psych verb’s enriched meaning from emotion to thought (*to*-infinitival clauses) to evaluation and ultimately to performativity (*that*-clauses), as below:

Psych-verb+nominal object complement > *psych-verb+to-clause complement* >
psych-verb+(that-)clause complement

I fear/’m afraid of earthquakes > *I fear/’m afraid to do something* > *I fear/’m afraid (that) I can’t, etc.*

As we move from left to right above, we witness a progression from emotion to negative views and negative valuation and lastly to performative function, this course reflecting initially resemanticization and gradually pragmaticization processes as the structures evidence a shift to more subjective discourse-based meanings. Following Traugott and Dasher (2002), we can claim that *fear* verbs develop performative uses and as such they have procedural functioning; they index the speaker-addressee interaction, and their function is to mitigate the threatening force of the propositional content (39, 40, 42), but also to secure the intended uptake of the couched speech act (41). Indeed, utterances like (41) may have a world-to-word direction of fit (Searle 1979) on account of the function of the *fear* verb. Rather than just mitigating the force of the threatening speech act, the *fear* verb may have a double-edged function serving also to ratify and consolidate the speech act as one issued by someone in authority or control over a course of action. What could otherwise be read as a statement now can be read as a rejection, etc. on the basis of the indexical function of the *fear* verb. This pragmaticization of the verb (acquiring specific

performative force) is attested in the unacceptability of imposing duplicate illocutionary forces as in *?Honestly, I'm afraid I can't accept your application*, while illocutionary parentheticals are possible when the verb signifies emotion: (*Honestly, I'm afraid of dogs*).

Since *fear* verbs can function in a negative way (expressing negative feelings, desires, etc.) it is expected that the performative function they carry out will often be in conjunction with a negative particle (*I'm afraid not/so, I fear not*, etc.), and in conjunction with a preceding speech act. After all, *I promise* (the paradigm of performative verbs) does not perform any promising on its own, severed from a preceding part, unless it introduces a complement clause. As mitigating devices, *fear* verbs can often be the bastion of charitability preventing injurious speech (Butler 1995), and their omission might reach the point of social callousness.

Fear verbs in conversational institutional discourse have a formulaic role to play signalling a speech act that is deemed to be either adversarial in the circumstances or introducing a proposition that may have a negative impact on the interlocutor, as above.

Furthermore, as *fear* verbs take the pragmatic course, their syntactic position becomes more flexible: the complement clause is promoted to the status of the main message, while the *fear* verb is relegated to the much more subjective-indexing position of a parenthetical verb:

44. *This clears the way for a possible return to the top job 12 months later, opponents fear.* (City, 16.10.07)

9. Implications

Wierzbicka's programme of employing NSM to account for emotion concepts is of a definitional and explanatory nature. Her scripts of emotions, based on their lexical manifestation, namely on the main lexeme representing the emotion, try to analytically explain the meaning of the words used for those emotions. NSM includes primitives like 'feel' and 'think', used in abundance in the explication of those universal emotions.¹⁰ As noted in Riemer (2006: 352),

¹⁰ Wierzbicka talks of emotion concepts rather than meanings, but as these concepts correspond to specific predicates, we are entitled to assume that she equates concepts to meanings in this respect. Again, the use of the term 'concept' can be controversial given its long history in philosophy, but in the tradition in which Wierzbicka works, we assume it to refer to a mental representation. But it's not clear

explaining the meanings of words is giving “an unexpected emphasis for a modern theory of lexical semantics”, since it is not at all clear that understanding meaning should be equated with explanatory definitions or reductive paraphrases, important, though, these enterprises might be.

Moreover, Wierzbicka's approach is based on the assumed universal indisputable primacy of primitives, such as 'feel' and 'think', used in specifying the meanings of the emotion lexemes she sets out to explain and define. However, as we have seen, this predilection for a cognitively gravitating perspective prioritizing feelings and thoughts rather than instinctual responses may be unwarranted, especially in view of the account of the etymological and evolutionary profiles of the *fear* predicates examined here. Their original meanings, etymology and morphosyntactic development raise doubts as to the undisputed priority of the emotions *per se* designated by these terms. The evidence presented here does not necessarily support prioritizing feelings (in the sense of cognitive awareness rather than sensations) over and above demonstrable behaviour ultimately indicating those states. Consequently, it can be claimed that it is not necessarily true that the emotional behaviour takes priority over its purported byproducts (sensations or other external indications or behaviours).

Indeed, fear can be conditioned. It has been shown that humans can demonstrate emotional learning without their conscious cognizing as that spelt out in Wierzbicka's scripts (section 3). It has been claimed that feelings are primarily shadows of the outer behaviour of emotions (Damasio 2003); tracing the original senses of the *fear* verbs leads to denotata of concrete external behaviour rather than of esoteric mental or psychological states. Even if views like those of Damasio's may be taken with a pinch of salt, Wierzbicka's account, suffers from a cognitive bias of propositionalizing emotions, as she bases her semantic analysis on propositions weighted down to cognitive thinking and feeling (see the clauses of the scenario pivoting around the predicates 'think', '(don't) know', etc.). A similar critique is levelled against Wierzbicka's account by Theodoropoulou (2003: 189), who claims that the more experiential somatic domain of emotions is “buried” and subjected to the cognitive domain of thoughts.

While in the case of emotion, bodily responses can be integral to its processes, as regards *fear* predicates, we have shown that they initially denoted just these bodily responses ('to (be) put to flight', 'to drive away', etc.), and only later by extrapolation of subjective experience did they come to denote the actual subjective emotion. Therefore, based on linguistic evidence alone, we are not

why she assumes universal concepts such as *think*, *want* and *feel* to be atomic, while those composed on their basis (e.g., *fear*, etc.) are probably supposed to be structured.

warranted to conclude that cognitive aspects of subjective feelings or emotions can have primacy over instinctive bodily responses to external stimuli (defence responses). To assume a reversal of this process by prioritizing cognitive aspects of fear approximating an almost psychopathologically-oriented interpretation of fear cannot be supported by the evolutionary semantics of *fear* predicates or the current wide range of the verb's semantics. Emotions can 'intrude' into our consciousness, but this 'intrusion' does not warrant our assumption that they evolved as conscious feelings (LeDoux 1996: 40), as Wierzbicka's scripts seem to suggest.

In any case, Wierzbicka's definitional account of *fear* words in English captures an unwarranted 'middle-of-the-road' interpretation that does not necessarily reflect core senses. Her definitional analysis of *fear* verbs does not capture senses reflecting instinctual defence-responses, or the verb's evolved pragmatic interpretations in social transaction. If we assume that in fear there is a chain from reaction to action, Wierzbicka stops the pendulum at the extreme of cognitive action, forsaking reaction senses of the verbs. But even so, she misses the further development of meaning and function of the verbs in the social domain. In effect, she misses the pragmatic uses of the verbs in the domain of performativity. It may be fruitfully suggested that the meaning range of the *fear* predicates can be more efficiently described, or even exhausted, in the context of the precise constructions in which they occur, as these were presented in the previous section (also see Kitis forthcoming). For, indeed, there is a great deal of conventionalized meaning differential between *fear/afraid* construction-types. *Fear/afraid+(that-)* complement constructions are much more cognitively-based (often meaning just 'think', or 'take the view') than *fear+nominal* ones, as the following examples illustrate. The latter, as well as the expressions in (50), may invoke a more somatic or behaviour reflecting concept reminiscent of the verb's semantic evolution:

45. ... *but I'm afraid I am going to have to ask you to leave.*
46. *I fear that the battle is going to obscure the substance, ...*
47. *Do you fear, Hussein, there will be a similar worldwide effort to profile suspicious Middle Eastern-looking ...*
48. *Fear prophets... and those prepared to die for the truth, ...*
49. *He feared the Panamanian people.*
50. *Fear of panic, fear for their lives, fear of snakes, shout of fear, fear pulled at his ribs, fear entered me like heroin had, a chill of fear, etc.*

(BUY)

Moreover, in Greek there is no differentiation between two distinct fear concepts corresponding to the two emotion lexes (*fear, afraid*), distinguished by Wierzbicka, as *fovume* does service for both. Are we then talking about distinct

concepts corresponding to two lexes in English? This view would lead us to the claim that experiences of fear are distinct for Greeks who apparently do not lexicalize types of fear emotion corresponding to the *fear/afraid* distinction. Wierzbicka (1999: 73) explicitly professes to “analyze the concepts *fear*, [etc.] (as well as *afraid*, [etc.]), as they really function in English, recognizing them for what they are: folk categories rooted in the English language rather than some language-independent absolutes.” If this is so, then questions may be raised as to the validity of claims that these words reflect English cognitive scenarios.

Moreover, what are the grounds for including some “experience-near” concepts such as *feel* and *want* within a universal language-independent inventory, while other “experience-near” concepts such as *fear* are considered language-specific, even though it is assumed that they occur in all languages? (see Wierzbicka 1999: 11, 286). Why are we entitled to distinguish between different types of fear, but not different types of feel or want/desire? After all, in cognitive science *fear* is used in a more or less generic sense to include within its genus a variety of fear-types (cf. the term ‘the fear system of the brain’). Besides, it must be stressed that Wierzbicka’s account disregards grammatical form as she does not distinguish between nouns and verbs in discussing emotion concepts corresponding to the words *fear* and *afraid*. But how can we differentiate between the two concepts encoded in the two lexemes (*fear/afraid*) disregarding the fact that *fear* is both a noun and a verb (while *afraid* does not nominalize), and as a noun it does service for all types of fear, ripping off the emotion from the experiencing subject and reifying it in its nominalized form? Might this nominalization not motivate Wierzbicka’s claim that *afraid* is “inherently personal... whereas *fear* is not” (Wierzbicka 1999: 73).¹¹

Adopting Wierzbicka’s perspective admittedly resonates with a grander scheme of potent cultural implications than a meaning specification programme would involve, but the question is whether this option is warranted in view of the findings and discussion in this study. It appears that, indeed, Wierzbicka’s account in this respect has to be reconsidered in light of the insights afforded by the diachronic account presented here.

Similar criticisms might carry over to Searle’s (1983) account of *fear* as denoting intentional states (see Smith 2003 for discussion). The notation for *fear* verbs is as follows:

Fear (*p*) → *Bel* (◇*p*) and *Des* (~*p*)

(If one fears that *p*, then one believes that *p* is possible, and one desires not *p*).

¹¹ Cf.: “...fascination with grizzlies has turned into fear. I was afraid to let my kids out of my sight.” (BUY)

Unsurprisingly, Searle is concerned with the *fear* verb as denoting thought and evaluation. But then the question that emerges is exactly the same as the one dogging Wierzbicka's account: at what stage of the verb's evolutionary process shall the theoretician pick on, and what criteria should be employed in order to sever a particular 'slice' of the whole range of the polysemy of the 'psych-'verb?

10. Conclusion

In this study, I have examined the diachronic trajectories of the main fear predicates in Greek and English. Our findings are astonishingly similar in both cases. *Fear* verbs in both languages appear to derive from similar concrete sources and further develop into more esoteric abstract domains of emotion through processes of metonymy. They have been further shown to develop pragmatic functions in the interpersonal domain acting as performatives and parentheticals. We have, therefore, witnessed processes of resemanticization and pragmaticization in their evolutionary histories.

In discussing the semasiological development of verbs into performative verbs, Traugott and Dasher (2002: 195) claim that "verbs with speech act meanings are typically derived from verbs with non-speech act meanings. Once this meaning shift has occurred, a SAV [speech act verb] that reports some event or state of affairs, often an event of speaking or cognizing, can be used to perform that same act or a related one, given the appropriate conditions for performativity, including use in the appropriate linguistic construction." While Traugott and Dasher (2002) discuss this evolution with respect to verbs of thinking, I have provided evidence that, not only verbs of thought (fig. 1, c) can develop further functions as speech act verbs (SAV) and as performative ones, but also verbs of emotion (fig. 1, a) can be recruited in this service. I have demonstrated that emotion verbs (fig. 1, a) can first develop as cognitive verbs of thought and speech (fig. 1, c) and these latter can, in their turn, further develop functions as performatives totally devoid of any emotion meanings. My findings, therefore, corroborate and further extend Traugott and Dasher's (2002) thesis.

Predicates such as *feel*, but also *fear*, *afraid*, are not to be taken at face value as denoting emotions or feelings. As Kakouriotis and Kitis (1999) and Kitis (forthcoming) have shown, *fear* predicates have been desemantised and resemanticised throughout their evolutionary history both in English and Greek and have further developed concurrent meanings in the pragmatic domain that are used to enact functions in the interpersonal sphere of communication. If this

is so, then to actually take just one current use (the one signifying emotion) as testimony to the predicate's referential or conceptual range is problematic. It is also significant that *fear* predicates, as shown here, started their lives as third-person descriptions of action before they shifted to first-person emotion predicates.¹² They are still used as third-person descriptions of emotions, and it is reasonable to claim that in this use *fear* predicates do not prime subjective meanings of fear but rather behavioural ones.

This study may also inform the debate on psych-verbs with respect to their structure, i.e. as to whether causative non-stative psych-verbs are linked to their respective non-causative stative ones syntactically or semantically. While the corresponding causative psych-verbs of fear are not examined here, it has been shown that the Subject experiencer psych-verbs of fear in both Greek and English are constructions that have their origins in metaphoric shifts from concrete domains to more abstract esoteric domains (cf. Klein and Kutscher 2005), from domains of action to domains of sensation, and have further developed functions in the more conversational domain of social transaction.

Furthermore, linguistic studies of emotion predicates can significantly inform studies of emotions in the field of cognitive science and philosophy. This study may make some contribution in this respect, too.

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¹² We can witness 'fear' in its causative agentive form as late as 1923 in spoken data: "Yet he will fear the Argentine to pieces in the early rounds." (BUY)

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