

THE CONCEPT OF FEAR vs. THE CULTURAL PROFILE OF THE AFFECTIVE COGNITIVE MODEL (BASED ON UNITS OF REPEATED SPEECH)

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Abstract

In modern linguistics, it has already become axiomatic that each natural language reflects a certain way of perception/conceptualization and creates its own "image" of the world. We believe that, in modern conditions of globalization and computerization, the study of the linguistic images of the world is extremely valuable and can gain relevance within the context of the dialogue between cultures. The manner emotions find their linguistic representation mirrors a model/grid for conceptualizing the affective experience specific to a culture. Still, the same emotion can be experienced differently in two different cultures or within the same culture and can therefore be the object of intercultural and intra-cultural, diachronic and diatopic variations. As a research methodology, in order to reveal the Romanian specificity of the forms of linguistic manifestation of the affections, in this case FEAR, we resorted to data obtained from the analysis of the units of the repeated discourse – proverbs and sayings, idioms, Romanian fixed expressions – which represent a code of the Romanian culture, based on their updating in a representative corpus, which includes approximately 180 units, a set of "credible", relevant and representative sources, reflecting the emotions and ways of affective expression specific to the Romanian cultural area.

Keywords: repeated discourse, linguistic universals, cognitive scheme, linguistic image of the world, cognitive-affective model

Rezumat

În lingvistica modern, a devenit deja axiomatic faptul că fiecare limbă naturală reflectă un anumit mod de percepție/conceptualizare și creează propria „imagine” a lumii. Considerăm că, în condițiile moderne de globalizare și informatizare, studiul imaginilor lingvistice ale lumii este extrem de valoros și poate căpăta relevanță în contextul dialogului culturilor. Modul în care emoțiile își găsesc reprezentarea lingvistică oglindește un model/grilă de conceptualizare a experienței afective specifice unei culturi. Or, aceeași emoție poate fi experimentată diferit în două culturi diferite sau în cadrul aceleiași culturi, putând fi, deci, obiectul unor variații interculturale și intra-culturale, diacronice și diatopice. Ca metodologie de cercetare, pentru relevarea specificului românesc al formelor de manifestare lingvistică a afectelor, în cazul de față FRICA, am apelat la date obținute din analiza unităților discursului repetat - proverbe și zicători, frazeologisme, expresii românești – care reprezintă un cod al culturii române, pe baza actualizării lor într-un corpus reprezentativ, care include circa 180 de unități, un set de surse „credibile”, relevante și reprezentative, care să reflecte emoțiile și modalitățile de expresie afectivă, specifice spațiului cultural român.

Cuvinte-cheie: discurs repetat, universalii lingvistice, schemă cognitivă, imagine lingvistică a lumii, model cognitiv-afectiv

In modern linguistics it has already become axiomatic that each natural language reflects a certain way of perception/conceptualization and creates its own "image" of the world. We believe that, in modern conditions of globalization and information technology, the study of the linguistic images of the world is extremely valuable and can gain relevance within the context of the inter-cultural dialogue. This was the mover that determined us to propose as an object of research the affective cognitive model specific to the Romanian cultural space. Emotions, as the researcher E. Illouz states, constitute individual, subjective experiences, but reported (and updated) to a broader (Illouz et al., 2014, pp. 221-244) social and cultural context. Emotions are placed at the interface of individual experience, collective meanings and social constraints (*ibid.*). However, affectivity is a reality that is placed at the interface between language/language system and culture. The way in which emotions find their linguistic representation mirrors a model/grid of conceptualization of the affective experience specific to a culture, from a two-way perspective:

- 1) language can determine or guide affective conceptualization;
- 2) the cultural configuration of a community (at a certain time and in a certain cultural space) through values, norms of conduct, relevant concepts, etc. implies a certain categorization of the affective life forms in the glottic sphere (through the segmentation of the surrounding world realities, specific lexicalization, a certain semantics of the affective terms, etc.)¹.

From the very start, we need to make two clarifications. The huge bibliography that has as its object of investigation the affectivity (*the affections/emotions/feelings*, etc.) configures a kaleidoscopic reality, which can be circumscribed to various fields: sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, history of mentalities, etc. and implicitly generates multiple divergences of opinion, gravitating mainly around a few pertinent and defining features of the affections, namely: the biological, social, linguistic, linguistic dimension, anthropological, cognitive, etc.

In the scientific world, the idea that emotions constitute a universal language is circulated and, yet the hypothesis of linguistic relativity – according to which the systems of concepts existing in a person's mind and, therefore, the essential features of his thinking are determined by the specific

¹In the anthropology studies have been revealed some dimensions of intercultural variation, in relation to which we also distinguish the variations of the affective experiences (it is about, for example, the value parameters *individualism-collectivism*, *distance from power*, *masculinity/femininity*, *avoidance of uncertainty*, *temporal orientation* of the model proposed by Hofstede in 1984). A classical dichotomy is that between cultures *individualistic* (defined by a structure socio-cultural independence, *a cultural framework of independence*) and cultures *collectivist* (defined by a socio-cultural pattern of interdependence, *a cultural framework of interdependence*) (see Hofstede).

language of which he/she is a person – accredits us the idea that emotions are built by socio-cultural parameters.

The second specification regards the main controversy related to the *universal* vs. the *culturally specific* character of affectivity. Although apparently dichotomous, these two dimensions are not mutually exclusive: the existence of some primary emotions *of the affective universals*, recognizable transculturally, which constitute a cognitive-affective nucleus, impregnated in the universal genetic code of people, finding linguistic expression (lexicalization) in all the languages of the world does not cancel the idea of their dependence and modeling on the socio-cultural framework in which they are updated (see Wierzbicka). Thus, as the researcher Gabriela Stoica states, the same emotion can be experienced differently in two different cultures or within the same culture, and can therefore be the object of inter-cultural and intra-cultural, diachronic and diatopic variations (Stoica, 1780-1840, p. 13).

By extrapolation, we emphasize that the affective language, so the linguistic expression of the affections has an implicit semiotic function, being culturally dependent. In this respect, it follows that both the affective concepts and their linguistic expression know a great transcultural and linguistic variety.

The objective of the research was to capture the way of conceptualization and lexicalization of emotions and the revealing of the affective cognitive model specific to the Romanian cultural space. We intend to highlight the cultural profile of the affective cognitive model related to several concepts, such as fear, longing, happiness, bitterness, etc., because we consider them circumscribed to the Romanian cultural space, having a landmark value in the Romanian language.

As a research methodology, in order to reveal the Romanian specificity of the forms of linguistic manifestation of the affections – in this case *FEAR* – we resorted to data obtained from the analysis of the units of the repeated discourse – proverbs and sayings, idioms, Romanian expressions – which represent a code of the Romanian culture (cf. Noica, Blaga, Stoica etc.), based on their updating in a representative corpus, which includes about 180 units of repeated discourse, a set of "credible", relevant and representative sources, reflecting the emotions and ways of affective expression specific to the Romanian cultural space.

In the alternative, I mention that, beyond the fact that proverbs/sayings, set phrases are universal and are transmitted over time from one nation to another, however, each people adapting them according to their own customs, therefore, they reflect the local, historical, and linguistic specificity. Short phrases/syntagms, which express gnomic truths, outside the historical time, paremies represent a code of culture, so they constitute true and authentic anthologies of common sense popular, resulting from the experiences of each people, being representative of the different languages.

Fear is an affect that has tangencies with the cultural dimension the distance of *power* (from Hofstede's model), which can involve variations of the forms of manifestation of affectivity. Cultures with a great power distance favor values such as conformity, obedience, hierarchical authority, which implies a specific update of fear. In such cultures, an emotional censorship is more strongly suppressed, in order to maintain the harmony of the social or institutional hierarchy (for example, the overt expression of disagreement with the interlocutor having a superior state is avoided)².

Fear is a kind of essential matter, which is related to human existence. Very eloquently, Heidegger described the fact that *fearing* is a basal form of existence in the world (according to Rotilă, p. 46). In mythology, fear was considered a more powerful force than men, which could be tamed with sacrifices and offerings so that its action, which sows horror, would turn to the enemy. The cultivation of fear in temples and churches with scenes of martyrdom and with paintings about the last judgment managed to frighten people, who were taught that fear is ubiquitous: on land, on water, in fire, and in the cold. This culture was maintained by the escathological biblical legends of the end of the world and revelation. Authors such as Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Freud, Kafka, Agatha Christie, Virginia Woolf, and many others have wielded anxiety from study and description to literary paroxysms, helping to decrypt and decipher human anxiety.

Fear is undoubtedly a general-human emotion. However, it is considered that each people interprets fear in a particular way: as such, "each people has, left by God, their own face, an image of themselves to see the world and to have it reflected for others" (Vulcănescu, 1996, p. 165).

Thus, it is believed that the Thracians, Dacians, Asian peoples and Vikings would not have had the cult of states of fear, and these states were attributed especially to women and children, to whom the idea that they must die at any time without fear was inoculated. The Geto-Dacians, according to the ancient chronicles, were not afraid of death, and even believed themselves immortal and went to meet their enemy with their bare chests, because they believed in eternal life. In his study titled *The Romanian Dimension of Existence*, the philosopher Mircea Vulcănescu says that the fear of death is not suitable for the Romanian mentality, and this distinguishes the Romanian people from all western peoples. This demeanor is anchored in eternity, and

²In the Romanian language, there have been many terms for *fear*, and the specific terminology - *anguish* and *anxiety* - has been taken in at the beginning of 20th Century (Ancient Greek and Roman cultures honored Fear, calling it *Anguish* or *anxiety*, which etymology has Sanskrit roots: "amhas" in other words *strait*, *narrowing*). Latins used *angusta*, term taken in French and German like *angoisse* and *angst*. Verb *anxiare* (*a difficult breathing, to suffocate*) and adjective with sense *medical anxious* is used in documents from 16th century).

the fear of death is a method coming from the west (...). And this lack of fear in front of death is very well staged in the Romanian folk ballads, with all their symbolism, and³ *Miorita* is the most eloquent in this respect: the only thing that preoccupies the hero when he finds out that he was put in a bad mind is not the fear of death, otherwise he would have taken the elementary precautionary measures, it's the fulfillment of the ritual.

We mention, in this respect, also the fairy tales of immortality among the Romanians, as a good "youth without old age and life without death" by P. Ispirescu, who, in the vision of the Romanian philosopher C. Noica, most appropriately expresses the being as an archetype in the Romanian version and, at the same time, the contrast between blind becoming – becoming for the sake of becoming – and meaningful becoming, becoming into being (see Mamulea, 2015, p. 157).

The idea is found crystallized in several Romanian proverbs, formulas of thought, which can lead to the reconstitution of popular philosophy and ethnosophy: *Of death do not be afraid and of life do not be careful; the one who fears death, runs after it.*

Undoubtedly, globalization and Westernization contributed to the desacralization and breaking of traditions, which changed the appearance and character of the Romanian. He has become as fearful today as a Westerner, an aspect recorded in phrases such as: *There is no cure for fear; It has nothing to do with fear; You're afraid with me, as I've got my gall broken with you; To be afraid of one's own shadow; When the serpent bites you, you are also afraid of earthworm; The bunny is not fearful, only that it kind of hides down; Of holy, may you be holy, but you still be aware of fear; Because of fear he cannot see the world; Fear is greater than being afraid; Fear always brings distress; Fearful' fears his shadow; The fearful one frightens others; Sturdy, but a little fearful; Are you afraid of me? Because I'm really scared of you; The fearful man always walks with the ice in his bosom, and so on.*

Often fear forces the Romanian to be honest, to respect the norm/laws: *Fear guards the melon fields; The clear sky of lightning is not afraid.*

Romanians see courage as an outcome consequence of fear: *Courage is the ability to behave the right way even when you are half dead from fear.*

³After M. Vulcănescu, Romanian soul is constituted from two antagonistic elements: the highlanders, i.e. the man living in the mountainous Romania and the people living on the huge plains of Romania. Moreover, the fight between Thracian shepherding ethos and the Slavic-Roman plowshare ethos went on for centuries, from 8th to 19th century, with variable outcomes. With the deforestation and transformation of Romania from a country of shepherds and cattle breeders, and from a country of soldiers, the shepherding ethos appears to give way to the plowshare ethos. The peoples' spirit of adventure, the spirit of peaks, the spirit of faraway horizons and bitter depths are slowly removed in favor of small horizons people of small villages in the plains, settled down and fearful (Vulcănescu, 1996, p. 193).

With the *institutionalized* emergence of religion, the fear generated by death, the implacable passage of time, as well as fatality often becomes a reason for ritual, which starts from a complex of inferiority of the collective mind in front of an incomprehensible nature. This implies the population of the collective Romanian imaginary with strong representations of divinity "along with the cycles of time lived subjectively by the individual – unstable, changeable, leading inexorably to old age and death, time lived with its sudden upheavals, with its unpredictable whims, with its anguishing irreversibility" (Ivancu, 2013, p. 87): Cf. *Why you're not going to get rid of what you're afraid of! Whoever sees that the neighbor's house is burning, must be afraid of his own; There is no magic cure for fear. Some die rather of fear than from illness, etc.*

However, the Romanian interprets fear as a vilifying emotion, its appearance being justified, as it is specific to the guilty one in the background: *The man of guilt is also afraid of his own shadow; He who is still afraid, does nothing; Sheep's courage: always nose-down; You had better not go to the forest if you are afraid of leaves; The fearful is half defeated; The thief of thieves is afraid ; Hatred and fear beget cunning; The unjust man fears everything and everyone.*

Often the Romanian ironizes at the expense of the emotion of fear: *the fearful is also afraid of all the weeds; He's afraid of his nest getting cold; He who fears more, he forgets the open door; Before the battle he opens his mouth and then fears the bite; Even a saint has a sense of fear; He is not taking a sun bath fearing his nose might melt; The horse is afraid of the whip, the man of the word, and the stubborn - neither of one nor of the other; The forest is not afraid of an axe without a tail; If you save money all your life for fear of poverty, you have already become her slave; there is nothing one could tie fear of.*

Fear makes the sinner more cautious. According to O. Ivancu, "Individually, the Romanian is always hesitant when it comes to important, significant actions. He thus becomes vulnerable because "the indecisive person lives permanently in the horizon of regret, of double regret. On the one hand, he anticipates the regret he would eventually know by acting and which, in fact, makes him not act" (Ivancu, 2013, p. 142). Here are some proverbs that come to confirm these findings: *He who got burned with porridge, he will blow even in the cold water; He who has got burned with soup he would blow even in yogurt.*

Fear is associated by Romanians with animals / insects, namely: *No fear of the ant, of the mosquito – no idea; Out of fear he takes his hat for a cat. He's afraid like a gypsy of a bee; He would go into the woods, but he fears the serpent; The coward is afraid even of an ant; If the world feared sparrows, it would not sow cornmeal; The craftsman spoils and drains of fear; He who's got bitten by the snake is afraid of the lizard too; Fear causes the rabbit to fall; Scalded cat is afraid of the cold; The sheep keep their heads down for fear of being seen by the wolf; If you're afraid of the wolf, don't go into the woods; If the wolf were afraid of rain, he would wear the mantle; The fox is not afraid of the hunter who boasts in the evening, etc.*

I've also noticed a few proverbs that record why there is no need to be afraid: *The voracious sharpener is not afraid of the scythe; Old lady is not afraid of soft bread; The poor man is not afraid of robbers; One only knows the fear of illness*, etc.

We also record some somatic phraseological expressions that refer to the concept of *fear*: *To have (to be with) the heart close to the mouth; To get fear into the bones; To wear the fear on shoulders (or in the chest)*.

Thus, *fear* is associated with a low temperature: *to get your blood frozen in your own veins; to get your liver frozen of fear*, an image that we also find in Russian and in French, which indicates the universality of the conceptualization of fear: Cf. rus. *Кровь стынет в жилах; Кровь леденеет (холодеет) в жилах*, fr. *être glacé de peur / d'effroi* etc.

And even *the voice*, within the somatic phraseological expressions, illustrates the emotive concept of *fear* in Romanian, as well as in Russian: *he lost his voice of fear* vs. *язык отнялся* (see Lifari).

Moreover, fear also has color in Romanian – yellow: *To turn yellow with fear*.

Of course, the study of the units belonging to the repeated discourse places the analysis of the Romanian cognitive-affective models on a cultural background specific to an older historical period (most of the Repeated Discourse (RD) units having centuries old age). The cultural dimensions revealed in the model proposed by Hofstede, such as *individualism/collectivism, independent self/interdependent self*, etc. are diachronic variables, also determining changes in the conceptual and linguistic representation of the affective life. Thus, essential mutations regarding the way of setting up the self, produced as a result of the larger socio-cultural changes, will immediately reconfigure the way of affective conceptualization. Therefore, the modernization of the society (involving a process of individualization, gradual emancipation of the individual) implies a redefinition of the affective experiences.

As it is known, the fundamental feature of the Romanian culture is the interference, the organic fusion between the traditional, Oriental-Balkan cultural model and the new, modern-western one; This overlapping of two apparently dichotomous mental patterns has *generated* a harmonious interpenetration, when certain aspects of Western culture graft on a local cultural matrix of classical and folk-traditional type, engaging/generating a *sui generis* cultural configuration, where the old and the new, the East and the West, the traditional and the modern coexist.

Therefore, to synchronize with the mutations of the extralinguistic context on which it is projected, justifying the diachronic variations of linguistic coding of the affective concepts, we resorted in the research to the correlation of the cognitive and cultural dimensions, in order to highlight the peculiarities of linguistic coding of the affective concepts. The broader

theoretical paradigm in which the research is located is generally that of cognitivism, which provides access to cognitive structures and schemes involved in the conceptualization of emotions.

For this purpose, we resorted to the data of the *Associative Dictionary of the Romanian Language*, gathered through the method of the associative experiment (elaborated in psycholinguistics). Thus, the pragmatic and associative meanings in which each word that designates an emotion is trained are particularly rich. The complex meaning of each word of this kind is the result of the important role these words play in articulating a whole range of cultural values, social relations.

The premise from which we started is that such a study can reflect the conceptual-historical dynamics of a certain *affective cognitive model* specific to a culture.

In order to reveal the Romanian specificity of the concept of *fear*, we also resorted to the data stored in the *Associative Dictionary of the Romanian Language*⁴, gathered through the method of the associative experiment (hereinafter AE) elaborated in psycholinguistics – a frontier discipline, which tries to substantiate the connection between neuropsychic processes, the world of thought and their verbal expression, between the conscious and the unconscious, in order to capture the mechanisms of representation through identifying the processes through which knowledge takes place. Studies in the field of psycholinguistics reveal linguistic and cultural relativity: thus, from a phenomenological perspective, the language and logic expressed through it represent an extremely important factor for the understanding and representation of the surrounding world. It is, in a way, an evolution of the "Sapir-Worf hypothesis", according to which different types of mentalities lead to various modeling of language. In this way, AE tries to establish the way of organizing information from a cognitive perspective, which allows us to capture the way in which various cultural forms are born. This is conditioned by the close interaction between the mental information processing system and the mental and cultural representations themselves. That is why EA's results prove, once again, that "Any culture can be characterized by a specific set of "cognitive maps", which define the experience and serve to guide the behavior of the members of the respective culture" (Terzea-Ofrim, p. 24)⁵.

⁴Popa, Gh., Sainenco, A., Pritcan, V., Trinca, L. et al. (2016). *Dictionarul asociativ al limbii române*. Vol. I: De la stimul la reacție. Junimea Publishing House.

⁵We have done a free AE with young people aged between 18-25 years, whose mother tongue is Romanian. The respondents were asked to answer instantly with the first word that came to their mind when they heard the stimulus word FEAR

Based on the achieved AE, we have identified two basic types of associations for the word-stimulus *fear* - syntagmatic associations and paradigmatic associations⁶:

Paradigmatic associations:

Synonyms: *frică* (= fear) (468), *spaimă* (= freight) (25), *groază* (= horror) (4), *anxietate* (= anxiety) (3), *fobie* (= phobia) (3), *emoție* (= motion) (2), *teroare*, *claustrofobie* (= terror, claustrophobia).

Associates: *durere* (= pain) (7), *nesiguranță* (= insecurity) (5), *singurătate* (= loneliness) (5), *examen* (= exam) (4), *slăbiciune* (= weakness) (4), *neîncredere* (= distrust) (4), *tremur* (= tremor) (3), *pericol* (= danger) (3), *tristețe* (= sadness) (3), *necaz* (= trouble) (2), *necunoscut* (= unknown) (2), *noapte* (= night) (2), *nou* (= new) (2), *pedeapsă* (= punishment) (2), *plăcere* (= pleasure) (2), *plâns* (= crying) (2), *sentiment* (= feeling) (2), *stress* (= stress) (2), *supărare* (= anger) (2), *ură* (= hatred) (2), *moarte* (= death), *boală* (= illness), *gol în stomac* (= emptiness in the stomach).

Animals or insects/creatures: *șarpe* (= snake) (5), *șerpi* (= snakes) (3), *câine* (= dog) (4), *câini* (= dogs) (4), *insecte* (= insects) (2), *emoție* (= excitement) (2), *animal* (= animal), *arici* (= hedgehog), *căprioară* (= deer),

(each proposed survey contained 100 stimulus-words, selected and generated by computer from about 500 stimuli, which are part of the core and mass of the basic vocabulary of the Romanian language: the stimulus word FEAR occurs, on average, in one of 5 surveys). So, the observance of this condition during the investigation allows to reduce to a minimum the time interval between the stimulus and the reaction: the respondent should not meditate on the reaction, as the concept of association excludes the idea of "thinking" over the answer. As respondents there were about 1000 students from several universities in the Republic of Moldova and Romania. It should be noted that the decisive factor for the choice of students as respondents within EA belongs to the fact that at the age of 17-25 years the formation of the lingual identity is already taking place, and the associations, identified within AE, reflect the linguistic competence and are relevant for the Romanian mentality (Караулов/Karaulov, 2011, p. 192). According to Karaulov's opinion, the relative stability of the linguistic capacity of native speakers (e.g., vocabulary, hierarchy of values, lexical valences) can serve straight basis for the description of mass consciousness in the Romanian society in the next 20-30 years, that is, for the period when today's respondents will constitute the active core of Society (ibidem).

⁶Respecting the tradition of modeling the associative field, at the beginning, the reaction-words that appear more often are presented (the number of reactions is indicated in parentheses), constituting the core of the associative field, after which the words that appeared less often as reactions to the respective stimulus - the periphery of the associative field - are indicated.

lupi (= wolves), *furnică* (= ant), *tigru* (= tiger), *șoareci* (= mice), *păianjen* (= spider)⁷.

Objects that cause the appearance of fear: *întuneric* (= darkness) (23), *fantome* (= ghosts) (3), *moarte* (= death) (2), *tunet* (= thunder), *impozit* (= tax), *școală* (= school), *examen* (= exam), *boală* (= illness), *monștri* (= monsters), *primejdie* (= distress), *necunoaștere* (= ignorance), *umbră* (= shadow), *țipăt* (= screaming), *violență* (= violence), *bătrânețe* (= old age).

Syntagmatic associations:

mare (= large) (9), *greă* (= heavy) (4), *negru* (= black) (3).

Causes that generate fear of darkness (= *frica de întuneric*) (4), of death (= *de moarte*) (2), of dog (= *de câine*), of God (= *de Dumnezeu*), of wolves (= *de lupi*), of loneliness (= *de singurătate*), of water (= *de apă*), of evil (= *de rău*).

A very relevant reaction for the Romanian spirit is *It does not exist*, as it comes in perfect consonance with the idea of the Romanian philosopher Mircea Vulcănescu, who mentions some fundamental attitudes of the Romanian in the face of existence. First of all, for the Romanian there is no idea of nothingness, then there is no absolute impossibility, there is no existential alternative, there is no imperative, there is no irretrievable, and most importantly, there is no fear of death – the feeling of *anchoring in eternity saves the Romanian in the most desperate situations, as he puts lead wings in the unspeakably favorable circumstances, with which the wing of fate did not touch him too often* (Vulcănescu, 1996, p. 193).

The conclusions we have reached, upon the investigation, prove that the emotional experience is not pre-cultural, but prominently cultural: emotions serve complex communication purposes, of a moral and cultural order. Emotions, therefore, are not mere labels for inner states, the essence of which is supposed to be universal. It is undeniable that emotions are forms of symbolic action with multiple joints at the level of culture and social structures. The application of the AE method has allowed us to elucidate the richness of the semantic "tasks" that the concept of "fear" carries in the Romanian. The associations identified through AE allow the decoding and construction, like a puzzle, of the significations of the given concept by engaging both the cognitive and the affective component – simultaneous, but also complementary processes, language being a preferential way in trying to reveal the way in which knowledge is organized and stored in the human mind.

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⁷As it can be noticed, many of them can be identified within the RD units either.

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