Experts versus Laypersons:

Differences in the metaphorical conceptualization of ANGER, LOVE and SADNESS

1. Introduction

Within the framework of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999; Lakoff 1987, 1993), emotion metaphors figure prominently as one of the best researched domains (Kövecses 1986, 1988, 1990, 1995, 2000; Lakoff & Kövecses 1987a, 1987b). Many of those studies, however, can be criticized for methodological flaws or an eclectic use of linguistic data (see, e.g., Jäkel 2003: 134f.). Our investigation analyzes English psychology guides available on the internet as corpus. This way, first of all, we gain reliable and quantifiable results from authentic discourses in those target domains ANGER, LOVE and SADNESS. While in principle this makes our approach a case of onomasiological-cognitive metaphor analysis (Jäkel 1997, 2003), the nature of the corpus gives our analysis a genre-specific orientation.

The central purpose of the paper, however, is to compare the discourse between experts and laypersons in the fields under investigation. Which metaphorical models can be attested on the basis of the corpus data? What are the findings concerning their absolute and relative frequency? How are the various conceptual metaphors utilized in concrete expressions? As a result we will bring out differences in the use of metaphorical models, yielding an interesting new perspective on the ubiquity of conceptual metaphors in everyday language. Furthermore, we can draw some conclusions concerning the motivation and communicative-rhetorical ‘surplus value’ of expert metaphors in that discourse of guidance and counselling.

I will start with a section (2.) on methodology, which precedes the main part of the paper (3.) with the presentation of the results of the investigation. Three subsections are devoted on ANGER (3.1), LOVE (3.2), and SADNESS (3.3) respectively, with the focus on ANGER. The final section (4.) draws some conclusions.

2. Method

The first problem of studying metaphors of emotion based not on introspection, but on authentic discourse data is to find a source of linguistic data. Where do we find experts and laypersons communicating on issues concerning ANGER, LOVE and SADNESS? In order to gain reliable and quantifiable results about those target domains, English psychology guides available on the internet were investigated (Beger 2008). The World Wide Web promised to be an easily accessible source of authentic language data from both, experts and laypersons. There are various web sites containing sections for people to turn to for advice with their emotional problems. The investigation focused on those web pages where a permanent team of experts or a single expert answers questions about emotional problems. In an attempt to establish professional credibility, web sites like these often advertise that their counselors hold some degree or qualification which enables them to deal with emotional difficulties. Though the truth of these claims cannot really be verified, there is an even more basic problem here: Is it a degree in psychology that makes anybody an expert in matters concerning ANGER, LOVE or SADNESS? Or what else is?

As the internet data is similar to a counseling interview, we are dealing with a special form of discourse. According to Nothdurft (1994: 15), the nature of counseling interviews is
characterized by an asymmetric discursive setting. Thus, we apply a functional, discourse-pragmatic definition of *experts versus laypersons* for the present investigation. We treat those interlocutors offering advice on emotions and having distance to the problem at hand as *experts*, and those seeking advice about emotional difficulties from experts and being affected by the problem as *laypersons*. As only psychology guides were explored, the corpus has a genre-specific orientation. In general, the discourse topic is determined by a problem with one of the investigated emotions as well as by the fact that someone turns to an expert with this problem. Compared with normal everyday conversation, this particular kind of discourse presumably favors, or even triggers, certain kinds of concepts of ANGER, LOVE and SADNESS. In a conversation with a friend, those same laypersons would probably talk differently, which might include the use of other metaphors. Likewise, they might choose different concepts when they do not have an acute problem with one of the emotions. Furthermore, the experts’ language will probably differ in other conversational settings, for instance in discourse among experts. Matters like these, as well as the question whether the use of metaphors alters in spoken conversation, represent interesting fields for further research (see Beger 2009b).

As a whole, the investigated corpus consists of 43,080 words, or 2557 sentences respectively. Of the three subcorpora, the LOVE corpus is the smallest, containing 567 sentences produced by experts and 212 sentences from laypersons. The ANGER corpus comprises 673 sentences of expert language and 131 sentences from laypersons. As the biggest subcorpus, the SADNESS corpus involves 777 sentences taken from experts and 197 sentences coming from laypersons.

Without additional technical devices, this corpus was then meticulously searched for metaphorical expressions concerning the target domains ANGER, LOVE and SADNESS, adopting the method offered by Jäkel (2003:141-143). Instead of using computer-supported search mechanisms, for example proposed by Stefanowitsch (2007), we decided to apply this method for two reasons. First, as discussed above, there are no large corpora available consisting of the specific expert-layperson-discourse we are interested in. Second, this investigation started as a pilot study and computer-mediated corpus analyses cannot account for novel metaphors or any kind of unexpected lexemes. To get an overview of all conceptual metaphors employed by experts and laypersons, however, it is necessary to be open for novel metaphors and constructions.

3. Results

First of all it was calculated how metaphorical the discourse is. All in all, the 2557 sentences of corpus data feature a total of 375 metaphorical expressions. That renders an average of 14.7% of the whole discourse metaphorical. The most noticeable result is the one for ANGER. Not only is ANGER the emotion displaying the highest frequency of metaphorical expressions in relation to the entire discourse about that emotion. ANGER is also the only emotion for which the laypersons use more metaphorical expressions than the experts. They even use almost twice as many metaphorical expressions which make 29.8% of the laypersons’ discourse metaphorical, while with the experts it is only 15.6%. Thus, we will begin with taking a closer look at the conceptual metaphors drawn on by both, experts and laypersons and the concrete metaphorical expressions they use for ANGER.

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1 For a more elaborate discussion of the problem of a definition for experts and laypersons see Beger 2009a.

2 For a more detailed description of the corpus see Beger 2009a.
3.1 ANGER

Experts and laypersons share ANGER IS THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER as the conceptual metaphor most of their metaphorical expressions can be assigned to. This supports the claim of Lakoff and Kövecses (1987:383) that ANGER IS THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER is the central metaphor of ANGER. However, laypersons draw on this concept less often than experts (compare table 1). The following utterances taken from the laypersons’ corpus evidence that we indeed find the metaphorical expressions proposed by Lakoff and Kövecses (1987:384-388):

(01) “It keeps building up inside and soon I feel like I will explode.”

(02) “Is it good to hold in my anger, or should I let it out before something happens?”

(03) “I’m worried because I keep bottling up my anger.”

The first example shows that the human body is perceived of as the CONTAINER for the emotion. As the CONTAINER has a bottom and a top, it is possible to implement the MORE IS UP metaphor. The combination of the CONTAINER image schemata and the MORE IS UP metaphor allows us to conceptualize an increase in emotional intensity as a rise of the FLUID in the CONTAINER. As the second part of the first example illustrates, the rise of the FLUID then puts pressure onto the human body with the result that the angry person feels like he would explode. The second example highlights the aspect that containers have an inside and an outside. It also indicates that it might be dangerous to keep the ANGER inside. The third example not only underlines the danger of keeping the ANGER in the CONTAINER, it also offers a possibility to close the CONTAINER. In this special case, the CONTAINER is a bottle which can be opened and closed easily.

The conceptual metaphor ANGER MAKES A PERSON EXPLODE is directly linked to ANGER IS THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, as we saw in example (01). Both metaphors can be subsumed under the general metaphor ANGER IS HEAT. Nevertheless, I analyzed the three metaphors separately. This procedure reveals an interesting insight. If we would subsume both ANGER MAKES A PERSON EXPLODE and ANGER IS THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER under the single metaphor ANGER IS HEAT, we would ignore the qualitative difference between the two conceptual metaphors. Although the heated fluid is dangerous in that it threatens to either escape the CONTAINER or make it explode, it can still be suppressed or cooled off. Thus, in this case the conceptualization implies a certain degree of control over ANGER on the part of the angry person. This is not the case in ANGER MAKES A PERSON EXPLODE, where the person concerned has already lost control over the emotion – with severe consequences. Looking at the two metaphors separately brings to light that while experts more often refer to the schema of the rising liquid or building pressure inside the human body, laypersons focus on the negative consequences when the ANGER gets too intense: The explosion of the body CONTAINER. The conceptualization of ANGER as something dangerous or even uncontrollable is in general more prominent in the laypersons’ data than in the experts’, as we will see in the following.

Expressions which can be assigned to ANGER IS INSANITY also account for 17.9% of all metaphorical expressions detected in the laypersons’ corpus about ANGER. This conceptual metaphor clearly conceptualizes ANGER as a very dangerous emotion, as ANGER makes one

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3 The case study of anger was conducted by Kövecses and Lakoff together and is published in several places (cf. e.g. Lakoff 1987, Lakoff and Kövecses 1983, Kövecses 1986). I will refer to the study published in Lakoff 1987.
lose mental health. A person who has lost his or her mental health cannot function normally. This is mapped onto the emotion ANGER. Thus, a person who is very angry has lost the ability to function normally (cf. Lakoff & Kövecses 1987: 391). The interesting point is that, in opposition to the laypersons, experts draw on ANGER IS INSANITY only very rarely, rendering 1.8% of all metaphorical expressions instantiating this conceptual metaphor.

In the subcorpus of the experts we find metaphorical expressions pertaining to conceptual metaphors which rather entail that the angry person can be in control over the emotion. ANGER IS A WEAPON is such a conceptual metaphor. A weapon is something we are in control of. Of all metaphorical expressions about ANGER in the experts’ corpus, 13.3% could be assigned to ANGER IS A WEAPON, whereas only 2.6% of the laypersons’ metaphorical expressions pertain to this concept. The following examples are taken from the corpus of the experts:

(04) “Thoughts that can trigger anger include personal assessments,…”
(05) “You always have a target that your anger is directed against…”
(06) “…your anger can turn inward – on yourself.”

ANGER, like a weapon, can be triggered (04), and can be directed against some target (05). In example (06) the weapon can even be directed against oneself. In the data of the experts there are slightly more metaphorical expressions instantiating that concept than in the data of laypersons. All the concepts analyzed so far have in common that ANGER is seen as something dangerous. Yet, there is quite a difference between the first two metaphors and the third one. While we may not have that much influence on the heat as part of our physiological reactions, we do have control over a weapon and the target it is directed against.

Another metaphor which does not conceptualize ANGER as something explicitly dangerous is ANGER IS A COVER. Examples pertaining to this conceptual metaphor were only detected in the data of the experts. Although only 4.6% of the metaphorical expressions for ANGER found in the experts’ corpus instantiate ANGER IS A COVER, it is still an interesting observation, considering that this conceptual metaphor is completely absent in the laypersons’ data. The experts’ corpus contains the following expressions:

(07) “Anger is nothing more than a cover for hurt, frustration or fear – or all three.”
(08) “But, if you look closely, you might find that behind the anger are more pertinent feelings, such as disappointment, sadness, fear, and so on.”
(09) “As you pay attention to your internal process, you can move past the anger to deeper emotions.”

These examples point out that ANGER is not the actual problem, but rather covering or hiding it. The real problem seem to be other emotions which are concretized as being hurt, frustration, fear, disappointment or sadness (07), (08). All emotions are conceptualized as objects in a container which can be arranged in different ways. Depending on the position of those objects, some of them can be hidden by the ANGER object, as indicated in examples (07) and (08). Another aspect of the CONTAINER image schemata is highlighted in example (09). Here, ANGER is an emotion on the surface but the important emotions are deeper down in the CONTAINER. While the first part of example (09) suggests that those emotions are inside the human body, the second part conceptualizes the CONTAINER of the emotions as an external entity which we can enter. Once we are in the container, we have to move past the
surface emotion ANGER to get to the deeper emotions which cause the problems. All three examples evidence that experts, in contrast to laypersons, look beyond the effects of ANGER to find the cause of the problems which trouble the laypersons. Experts obviously approach ANGER in a more analytical fashion. Their knowledge about the human psyche seems to involve the notion that ANGER is an emotion which results from suppressing other emotions. Perhaps they use the metaphor ANGER IS A COVER to make laypersons aware of this, in order to enable them to tackle the underlying problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANGER IS…</th>
<th>Experts</th>
<th>Laypersons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER</td>
<td>25.7 %</td>
<td>17.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…A WEAPON</td>
<td>12.8 %</td>
<td>2.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…HEAT</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>2.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…MAKING A PERSON EXPLODE</td>
<td>4.6 %</td>
<td>12.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…A COVER</td>
<td>4.6 %</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…INSANITY</td>
<td>1.8 %</td>
<td>17.9 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Relative frequency of metaphorical expressions instantiating particular metaphors of ANGER; not all metaphors are listed here.

3.2 LOVE

According to the corpus evidence, LOVE, in contrast to ANGER, is not conceptualized as something in a container. On the contrary, LOVE is conceptualized as forming a container itself, as is evidenced by the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A CONTAINER. Yet, Kövecses neither refers to LOVE IS A CONTAINER when he establishes his ideal model of romantic love, nor does he mention this metaphor in what he calls the typical model of love (1988: 56-71). Instead, Kövecses proposes LOVE IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER as a conceptual metaphor of this emotion and gives examples like “She was overflowing with love” (2000: 26). This metaphor belongs to the very general metaphor THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS (1988: 43). As we have seen, ANGER is indeed understood as residing in the human body by both, experts and laypersons. Yet, no comparable metaphorical expression could be detected in the subcorpore of LOVE. According to the analyzed data, LOVE IS A CONTAINER is one of the most important conceptual metaphors used. 16.1% of the metaphorical expressions about LOVE detected in the experts’ corpus instantiate this metaphor. In the data of laypersons, even 29.6% of all metaphorical expressions refer to LOVE AS A CONTAINER, although this still does not make it their most frequent metaphor. Interestingly, the metaphors LOVE IS A CONTAINER and LOVE IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER oppose each other. Bringing in the corpus evidence yields the sobering effect that there is not a single metaphorical expression in the data instantiating the concept LOVE IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER. Considering the high frequency of metaphorical expressions for ANGER implying that ANGER is conceptualized as a FLUID IN A CONTAINER, it seems that LOVE and ANGER are partially understood via opposing metaphors.

However, the data not only offer differences in the conceptualizations of the three emotions, but also reveal distinctions between the metaphors for one emotion comparing experts and
laypersons. The most frequent concept for LOVE employed by the laypersons is the metaphor LOVE IS A UNITY OF PARTS. While every third of the laypersons’ metaphorical expressions for LOVE exemplifies this conceptual metaphor, only 8% of the metaphorical expressions of the experts about this emotion instantiate LOVE IS A UNITY OF PARTS. The conceptualization of LOVE expressed in this conceptual metaphor, which laypersons use more than four times as often as experts, is a rather romantic one, as we can see in the following examples:

(10) “Since then they moved in together and are inseparable.”

(11) “It just tore us apart as it was more out of spite than real love for the guy I lived with.”

(12) “I don’t ever want to lose him, he means the world to me, and without him I’d be broken.”

The parts which form a whole correspond to the lovers in a relationship. In the ideal case they share the feeling of LOVE, probably to an equal degree, and live in a state of harmony (cf. Kövecses 1988: 56). Correspondingly, when this UNITY breaks apart, one of the lovers no longer loves the other one. Example (12) even indicates that the separate parts of the whole cannot exist independent of each other.

In contrast to this romantic concept of LOVE, we find a rather unemotional view on this emotion in the experts’ data. The second most frequent expert metaphor of LOVE is LOVE IS A STRUCTURED OBJECT. 15.2% of all metaphorical expressions about LOVE detected in their corpus instantiate this conceptual metaphor. In the laypersons’ corpus expressions pertaining to LOVE IS A STRUCTURED OBJECT only account for 3.7% of all metaphorical expressions. Let us consider the following examples taken from the experts’ corpus:

(13) “…your chances of actually building the relationship you want is pretty damn slim”

(14) “I know you are looking for ways to repair, not run”

(15) “Like everything in life, relationships must be tended to and renovated to be kept at full capacity, call it love spring cleaning.”

The examples indicate that relationships require planning, effort and time. A positive aspect of structured objects is that damages can be repaired, as example (14) demonstrates. In example (15) we find two different structured objects mixed together. While usually houses or flats are renovated, it is a machine we keep at full capacity. The last part of the utterance conceptualizes the relationship as a house or a flat again by extending the metaphor creatively. This is also an example for the general phenomenon we find in the corpus data: Experts use more creative extensions than laypersons. Even more important is the experts’ use of LOVE IS A STRUCTURED OBJECT, though. This conceptual metaphor emphasizes the activity of the lovers by ascribing to them conscious planning, creation, maintenance and repair as well as the supply of energy. Another conceptual metaphor, which also views LOVE in a matter-of-factly way, experts pertain to when talking about the emotion, is LOVE IS AN ECONOMIC EXCHANGE. Expressions like “success, happiness, and the ability to give and receive love all hinge on our relationships” demonstrate that LOVE is regarded as a valuable commodity which can be exchanged between the lovers, referring to the lovers in a relationship as business partners involved in economic transactions. Even more interesting is the complete absence of metaphorical expressions belonging to LOVE IS AN ECONOMIC EXCHANGE in the laypersons’ corpus. The romantic attitude towards LOVE we have
encountered in LOVE IS A UNITY OF PARTS can be dangerous. To believe that one is only complete when forming a UNITY with someone else means that it is impossible to function alone. This may be a reason for mental problems. The experts’ use of the metaphor LOVE IS AN ECONOMIC EXCHANGE and LOVE IS A STRUCTURED OBJECT (together representing more than every fifth metaphorical expression in the experts’ data) may be intended to help the laypersons to gain control over themselves again and overcome their emotional problem.

3.3 SADNESS

Although both experts and laypersons employ the same metaphor most frequently, there is a huge difference in their use of this metaphor. While about every third metaphorical expression of experts about SADNESS pertains to SADNESS IS DOWN, laypersons relate to this concept even more than twice as often. Only 34.2% of all metaphorical expressions detected in the experts’ corpus about SADNESS can be assigned to SADNESS IS DOWN but 81.3% of all metaphorical expressions of the laypersons relating to SADNESS pertain to this metaphor. Laypersons seem to draw on this concept almost exclusively, considering that the other metaphors that were found in the laypersons’ data were used only by a single person. The metaphor SADNESS IS DOWN is closely linked to our physical experience while feeling this emotion. Lakoff and Johnson state that a “drooping posture typically goes along with sadness” (1980: 15). The downward oriented bodily posture is mapped to the emotional state, as examples taken from the laypersons’ data demonstrate:

(16) “I am feeling kind of low right now.”
(17) “I have decided not to contact my ex because that gets me down as well.”
(18) “However, she’s been getting quite depressed lately.”

The examples suggest that an increase of SADNESS is experienced as being physically nearer to the ground. One can be just low in one's physical position like in example (16), or even down on the ground as example (17) suggests. Additionally, this example (17) shows that another person is able to evoke feelings of SADNESS, which is conceptualized as pushing someone physically downward. In example (18), the lowest possible physical state is mapped onto the most intense feeling of SADNESS. Being depressed means being pressed down to the ground, which implies the impossibility of being in any lower position. Nevertheless, experts also draw on conceptual metaphors which are not closely linked to our spatial orientation.

Yet, the most notable difference between the experts and the laypersons regarding SADNESS is the difference in the number of conceptual metaphors they employ. While laypersons only pertain to three different concepts when talking about SADNESS, experts employ eight conceptual metaphors. Applying a greater variety of different metaphors when talking about SADNESS obviously allows experts to shed light on the problematic issues from multiple angles, highlighting different aspects. This is not only true for SADNESS, but for all emotions.

4. Conclusion

To summarize some of our general findings based on the corpus evidence: On the one hand, a higher number of different conceptual metaphors occurs in the experts’ data. On the other

4 For a detailed overview see Beger & Jäkel 2009
hand, even where experts and laypersons share some of the conceptual metaphors about LOVE, ANGER and SADNESS, they show marked differences in the frequency of metaphorical expressions instantiating those concepts. The best explanation of these two facts seems to be that experts apply metaphors, consciously or unconsciously, in their attempt to support some kind of therapeutic reframing. Thus they will introduce alternative metaphors in order to suggest to those individuals seeking their advice alternative ways of conceiving of emotions which pose personal problems.

Looking back at ANGER, laypersons conceptualize this emotion as something involving a loss of control (ANGER IS INSANITY) or as something dangerous (ANGER IS MAKING A PERSON EXPLODE) by far more often as experts do. Experts, on the other hand, apply the metaphor ANGER IS A COVER, which implies a rather analytical perspective on the emotion, and a metaphor which suggests that we can control ANGER (ANGER IS A WEAPON). They also use more concepts for ANGER, which indicates that they try to give laypersons more constructive perspectives on their ANGER.

Taking into account the metaphors for LOVE experts relate to, this becomes even more apparent. By far the strongest metaphor for LOVE detected in the laypersons' data was LOVE IS A UNITY OF PARTS. It is likely that experts employ this metaphor far less often because they see the need of having some distance to the emotion in order to handle problems concerning LOVE. Strong evidence for the fact that experts try to convey a more matter of factly perspective on LOVE are the conceptual metaphors LOVE IS AN ECONOMIC EXCHANGE and LOVE IS A STRUCTURED OBJECT. Furthermore, experts employ more different conceptual metaphors than laypersons which means that the latter’s’ view on LOVE is rather narrow. The use of more concepts allows the experts to highlight different aspects of LOVE which might help the laypersons with their problems.

Although the corpus data reveals important differences in the conceptualization of ANGER, LOVE and SADNESS between experts and laypersons, some questions remain. How influential is the fact that all the laypersons in the corpus data obviously experience some problem or difficulty with their emotions that makes them seek advice? Would less problem-ridden, happier laypersons produce different emotion metaphors than those advice-seeking individuals? Furthermore, as the investigated corpus consists of written discourse only – will laypersons and experts draw on different conceptual metaphors in spoken discourse? To find out if laypersons in spoken discourse employ metaphors for ANGER, LOVE and SADNESS diverging from those detected in the present corpus, another study was initiated in which guided interviews about the three emotions were conducted with laypersons, who were not seeking advice in these matters. The results will be due this summer (cf. Beger 2009b).

From an Applied Cognitive Linguistics perspective, it would also be interesting to know if the laypersons actually adopt some of the perspectives on ANGER, LOVE and SADNESS proposed by the conceptual metaphors introduced by the experts. To what extent do they understand the advice administered in the shape of conceptual metaphors in the first place? And will they actually internalize the constructive aspects highlighted by the experts, benefitting from this metaphorical reframing to modify their actual behavior? To see how useful conceptual metaphors can actually be as a therapeutic device, some comprehensive long-term studies would have to be conducted.
Appendix: Sources of linguistic examples

(01) http://www.laurieslovelogic.com/questions/82.htm (13.04.2009)
(02) http://www.teengrowth.com/index.cfm?action=info_advice&ID_Advice=3459
(30.03.2008)
(03) http://www.teengrowth.com/index.cfm?action=info_advice&ID_Advice=3459
(30.03.2008)
(07) http://www.drphil.com/articles/article/224 (29.03.08)
(08) http://www.guidetopsycho.com/anger.htm#8 (11.04.2008)
(09) http://www.councilforrelationships.org/articles/handling-anger_9-5-05.htm (29.03.2008)
(10) http://www.wayneandtamara.com/topicgrief.htm (31.03.08)
(12) http://www.lovingyou.com/content/advice/archive.php?M=04&D=24&Y=02 (25.03.08)
(14) http://www.lovingyou.com/content/advice/archive.php?M=11&D=17&Y=04
(25.03.2008)
(15) http://www.lovesickfools.com/articles/failing_relationship.html (27.03.2008)
(16) http://www.its4teens.com/index.php?a=advice&t=read&id=935&PHPSESSID=0232465ff476c5acf7b126b3a7c9e1e2 (30.03.08)
(17) http://www.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=advice&id=679&at=1&cn=5&d=1
(30.03.08)
(18) http://www.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=advice&id=2639&at=1&cn=289&d=1
(30.03.08)

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