The moral lexicon of the Warlpiri people of central Australia

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1. Introduction
Moral considerations enter into practically every type of human social relationship we know about. Yet morality is not specified in any of the main reference works on the Indigenous peoples of Australia. The topic does not appear in the index of the Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia (Horton 1994), the ‘Australian Aborigines’ section of The Australian Encyclopaedia (Appleton 1988), John Greenway’s Bibliography of the Australian Aborigines (1963), or The Recognition of Aboriginal Customary Laws (ALRC 1986). Typing in ‘morality’ or ‘moral’ or ‘morals’ in the AIATSIS Mura Catalogue produces 314 titles, most of which are concerned with moral issues arising from British colonisation. A large subclass deals with the subject of professional ethics in Aboriginal studies. Several articles discuss the relationship between Indigenous moral values and Indigenous religion or mythology (R Berndt 1970, 1979; C Berndt 1988); one paper analyses
the effects of modernisation on Indigenous morality (Peterson and Taylor 2003); and two essays approach the material from the perspective of human evolution (Priest 1986; ter Weer 1973). For the most part, however, the relevance of the listed works to Indigenous morality would appear to be diffuse or non-existent.²

For the purposes of a recent conference session on the history of anthropology, I revisited Edward Westermarck’s long-buried magnum opus, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (1906) (Hiatt 2004). This gave me the opportunity to present the moral ideas of the Gidjingarli people of Arnhem Land on the basis of my field observations beginning in 1958 (Hiatt 1965), and Katherine Glasgow’s *Burarrwanga Dictionary* (Glasgow 1994).³ Later I began to think about amplifying the investigation to take in other parts of Indigenous Australia. By good fortune, in 2003 David Nash drew my attention to an electronic Warlpiri-English dictionary called Kirkirr (meaning ‘cluck’). As yet unpublished, it contains some 10,000 entries in the Warlpiri-to-English section and is notable for definitions provided by native-speakers, multiple exemplifications in the vernacular, and extensive cross-referencing.⁴ The unprecedented sophistication and richness of the lexical material more than compensated for my lack of first-hand knowledge and made Warlpiri the obvious choice for a complementary analysis.

My primary objective in this paper is to establish from the data the types of behaviour regarded by the Warlpiri as morally good and bad. By this expression I mean ways of acting towards others that are conventionally approved or disapproved.⁵ Kirkirr provides an appropriate starting point inasmuch as it articulates a large degree of consensus. Later in the paper the results of my lexical analysis will be augmented by a review of relevant ethnography. In the final sections I compare Warlpiri moral values with those of the Gidjingarli and sign off with some not particularly original conclusions about the purpose of morality.

2. Words that match ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’

How would a person without a knowledge of English proceed if they wanted to determine the sorts of behaviour regarded by the English as morally good and bad, and the only source of information available was a bilingual dictionary? One way would be to look up terms of moral approbation and disapprobation in their own language in the hope of finding not only equivalents in English but empirical examples as well. That is how I began my own investigation of the Warlpiri moral lexicon.

When asked to find words that match ‘good’ and ‘bad’, Kirkirr produces lists of fourteen and six terms respectively. Examination of the entries for each list indicates that the most commonly used counterparts for ‘good’ is ngurrju; and that three terms maju, ngawu, and punku are used more or less interchangeably as the most common counterparts for ‘bad’. It is also evident that, like their English counterparts, many of the terms may be used in non-moral as well as moral senses e.g. ‘good news’, ‘good health’, ‘bad country’, ‘bad smell’.

- **ngurrju** good, nice, OK, alright, right, well, happy, content, quiet, tame, well-behaved, perfect
- **maju/-maju** bad, useless, worthless, ruined, poor, ill, non-functional, no good, wrong, nasty
- **ngawu/-ngawu** bad, worthless, immoral, wrong, badly-behaved, rotten, no good, useless
- **punku** bad, undesirable, horrible, revolting, evil, rotten

We may regard these four terms⁶ provisionally as the main lexical signifiers of moral evaluation among the Warlpiri. As labels of endorsement or condemnation, however, they contain no indication in themselves of the sorts of thing they are likely to be attached to. For example, the moral definition of ngurrju says merely that it means a person who is not badly behaved or evil, but really good. The next step, therefore, is to find examples in which the terms are applied to particular actions, traits, dispositions, or states of affairs.

I set about doing this by selecting some 150 English terms from the ‘English-to-Warlpiri’ section of Kirkirr that seemed likely to be associated with moral judgments. I then examined their Warlpiri counterparts for examples in which behaviour was qualified by one or more of the above four terms. As the corpus of relevant
Warlpiri terms developed, I followed up 'see also' references and onscreen semantic networks. The examples below represent more or less the total haul. I am not saying no others are likely to be found.

3. Examples of 'Good' and 'Bad' behaviour

The items below are presented in alphabetical order. Each item is extracted from a Kirrirkirr entry for a Warlpiri word, which is shown in bold italics at the top e.g. jama. This is followed by the assigned English counterparts, e.g. generous, giving, kind. Examples are presented first in Warlpiri and then in English, with the terms for 'good' or 'bad' underlined in the former and their English translations in the latter.

The number of examples presented in each entry in Kirrirkirr differs considerably, from none to a dozen or more. I have not included examples under 'Good' and 'Bad', even when they fairly obviously have a moral content, unless references to behaviour are qualified by ngurrju, maju (-maju), ngawu (-ngawu), or punku. This is the best guarantee I can find that the English gloss is not importing moral judgments into a Warlpiri text that does not contain them. For instance, linjarpa (sense 2) is glossed as 'killer, murderer, fighter', but the definition provided is 'a person who severely injures or kills another person'. Homicide is murder only if it is judged to be unlawful, and one would need to be confident that a comparable judgement was being made in Warlpiri before using it as a translation.

In a few cases I have not included examples even though they contain behaviour described as 'bad', in order to discuss them separately below (section 4, 'Unaggressive/Aggressive' : 'Fusillanimous'). I have not included examples containing Warlpiri terms for 'good' and 'bad' in what would be considered non-moral senses in English.

**Good**

*jama* generous, giving, kind

Jama, ngulaiy yangka yapa ngurrju
yinjapanu kajikangku yirri miyi manu kuyu
manu marriyirirari. Ngulayja jama.

Jama is *good* person who gives freely. He can give you bread or meat or money even. That is what *jama* is.

*jami* well-behaved, good-natured, of good character, quiet tame, mild

1. See *jami*, 'unaggressive/aggressive', section 4 below.

2. Yapa yalumpu jami, kunuwaru, ngurrju. That person is good natured, not belligerent, good.

*namu-namu* very good, excellent, of good character, good disposition, proper, clever, expert

Watilpa ngurrju-yajala yinuwa, kunuwaru, namunamu.

The man was very *good* too, not aggressive and making trouble, a good type.

*ngampa-ngampa* responsible, helpful, active, willing to work, feel sorry for, kindly disposed towards, sympathetic, kind, concerned for

Ngampa-ngampa karla mirru-myina
kurungurlu kirdaku, ngulaju yingkilpawangi, ngurrju.

The kurungurlu works willingly for the kind. He is not lazy, but *good* and helpful.

*pukurl-pukurlpa* loving, kind, proud of, happy for, contented, friendly, peaceful, pleased

Pukurl-pukurlpa, ngulaju yangka kujaka
yinuwa yapa ngurrju miyi-yinjapanu manu
kuyu-yinjapanu — yapa ngurrju-nayariri
kunuwangi manu yapa ngurrju-nayariri
jama-nayariri.

Pukurl-pukurlpa is how are a person is who is very *good* and always gives one food and meat — a very *good* peaceful person or a very *good* person who is very generous.

yalya compliant, acquiscent, easy, easy-going, obedient, willing, kind

Yalumpu kurdu-pardu ngurrju. Yalya ka
yinuwa. Kaajilpam kintjirrinyi-mantarla
ngapaku, kajikangku yalya yinuwa mara
ngapaji.

That child is *good*. He does what you ask. If I ask him to get water then he gets the water for you willingly.

*yulkangi* good (morally), clean-living, moral

Yulkangi, ngulaju yangka kujaka yinuwa
yinuwa-yinjapanu — yapa ngawu-ngawu-wanu manu
majau-maju-wanu, yapa yangka yarruwa-
wanu karnta-wanu manu yapa majau-
majau-wanu, yangka kirdaju, manu
yulkangi.

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Yulangi is when a person is clean, someone who is not bad, a person who doesn't go with the wrong woman, a person who doesn't do the wrong thing, one who is clean.

**Bad**

**Jatu-jatu** spoiling for fight, trouble-maker, bothersome, nuisance

Jatu-jatu, ngulajyangka jukajanya nyinami yapa marra-paj-marra-paj. Yapa kuluku-kuluku-maninjawitawangu manu yapa jiliwiri-maninjawitawangu, yapa winkirr-pa, manu *maju*-maju yaarr-pari. Jatu-jatu is when a person is bothersome. It is a person who tries to start fights all the time and teases people, a badly behaved person, one who is *no good* and badly behaved.


Kurlukurlu is a *bad wrong-doing* person who doesn't give anyone much money, who only gives away very little — either a man or a woman. It is a *bad* person who hides all their things away and only gives away very little.

**Liina** selfish, greedy, mean

Liina ngulajyangka jukaja nyinami yapa *punku* wingi jinjawangu njiyawangu manu jamawangu yapa jukaja nyinami njiyakantikantis jinjawangu yapakari jinjawangu. Liina is a *badly behaved* person who doesn't give anything away and who is not generous, a person who doesn't give anything to anyone.

**Maui** bad, useless, worthless, ruined, poor, ill, non-functional, no good, unwell, wrong, nasty

1. Yumi-ngurruru-nyuru yangkaju wurulu-manu-pardurulu. 'Karingantarna maju-jarrja waja. Ngajilyukjuja!' 'Makurru-punjirji mayingki jukaja rdipija?' 'Yuwayi. Ngula.' That old woman said about herself, 'I did the *wrong* thing. I did.' 'Did your son-in-law meet up with you?' 'Yes, that's it.'


It you who is the *bad* one, you, Japaljarri. It's not the others who are *bad* but it is you who stole that money and took it away and it's you who is always making trouble with people over money; starting fights with people over money.

**Minjinpa** bully, aggressive, picking a fight, trouble-maker, quarrelsome, bothersome, bad-tempered.

Minjinpa, ngulajyangka jukaja nyinami yapa wati manu karnta kulku-kuluku-maninjawitawangu, jukaja jukajajana yapa kuluku-kuluku-manu yangka jukaja yapa wapannelkuru nyunngakurra, yangka yapangku *maju*-*maujirru*, *punkungku*.

Minjinpa is a man or a woman who always makes trouble, that is, who goes picking a fight with people who are sitting quietly and not involved in a dispute. Such a person is *bad*.

**Ngawu** bad, worthless, immoral, wrong, badly-behaved, rotten, no good, useless


Ngawu is like meat which is no *good*, which is rotten. That is *bad* meat which makes you sick in the stomach. That is *ngawu*. Also a person who is *badly behaved* with many women, like a Jungarrayi who is not right, who is a man of a Napangardi, Napaljarri, Namija-punjirru or Nakamarra as a lover. That is what ngawu is.

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yapakairiji ngarrirra 'Punku kanpa nyuntu nyina. Ngawu-pajirri kangkuli yapangku paningku nyuntuju'. They call each other bad ones, like when someone talks lies, then people say to each other, 'You are bad'. Everyone calls you a bad one'. ngayarrka greedy, voracious
Definition: wanting large quantity of something, especially food
Ngayarrka ngulaji yangka kuja ka nyinami yapa punku miyi-maku-ngarinjiwatawangu manu kuyu-maku-ngarinjiwatawangu, yangka punku purulpa. Kurdu marda, wati marda, karnta marda, yangka nuyakanitikanti ngarinji-wita-wangu ngayarrkajii. Ngayarrka is a bad person who eats up all the food, one who is greedy. Either a child or a man or a woman who eats a lot of everything.

This Nakamarra runs around from man to man from one Japaljarri to another and from Jupurrurla to Jupurrurla and from Japangardi to Japangardi. She is the worst one, really bad.14

pardura bad-tempered, aggressive, hot-tempered, belligerent
Pardura is a bad person who is aggressive and who picks fights all the time — typically a man. One who goes around hitting other people by throwing boomerangs at them when those people, just sitting down, make the hot-headed belligerent14 person angry.
punku bad, undesirable, horrible, revolting, evil, rotten
Punku, ngulaji yangka kuja ka nyinami yapa maai-maai, manu yurnilyka, manu ngawu-ngawu, yapa warlurr-warlurr-yirrarnin-

japanu, manu yapa magu-manninjapanu, karnta marda, ngarrka marda.
Punku is when a person is bad, a nuisance, and who always makes trouble and who upsets people. It can be a woman or a man.
puurri-pa selfish, self-centred, egotistical
Puurri-pa, ngulaji yangka kuja ka nyinami yapa ngawu manu maai yapa, jinta-ngawurarra.
Puurri-pa is a bad person, an unkind person who only thinks of himself.
waayi-waayi wrong way, immoral, morally bad, badly behaved, wrong marriage partners
Waayiwaayi, ngulaji yangka kuja ka nyinami yapa ngawu-ngawu karnta yangka kuja ka nyinami wungi kuja ka parnki watikari-watikarikirra warrrakurrpa, jungarniwan-gukurra waitkira, karntju.
Waayiwaayi is like a person, for example a woman who is no good and who is badly behaved who runs to other the right categories of men.

warriji wrong skin, wrong-way marriage partner
Punku, Wungki-jarrija. Warriji-jarrija, maai.
He's bad. He did the wrong thing. He married the wrong way. He's no good.
warrura wrong skin, wrong-way marriage partner
Definition: marriage partner or lover not in the correct kin relation
Majumpa, warrurakurrpa.
You are wrong, you have a wrong skin wife.
wiinkiyikjji rude, persistent, insistent, stubborn, demanding
Wiinkiyikjji is like a person who insists on another giving him money in an impolite way — one who is very persistent and bad-mannered. One who is not easy-going or who shows no shame, one who is badly behaved.
wilji persistent (in fights or arguments), stubborn, determined, obstinate, persevering, insistent
Wangkajalurla nyamangu watiki, 'Yampiya karnta yalji?' Lirra wiri manu punku! Kulu- witaawangu!' Wiljingk-i-jiki kangu yalji karnta watingkji ngurakarri-kirra.
They said to that man, 'Leave that woman! She's a big mouth. She's no good. She's a big trouble-maker.' But the man still persisted and took that woman to another place to live.

**uwiyal-uwialpa** hard (of person), stubborn, tough, person whose mind can't be changed, non-compliant

Yalumpuju punku uwiyaluwialpa. Patarna wawil-yiarrnu punku — liyikurlu ka nyinami.
That fellow is bad and inflexible. I tried to get him to change his mind but he's bad.
He's got no feelings at all.

**yapa-ngarnu** cannibal, man-eater

Literally: human-eater

**Punku** yalarri yapa-ngarnu Waringarri-patuju?
Are those Waringarri really bad cannibals? yilarinji obstantiate, stubborn, one who refuses to listen to advice, heedless, pig-headed


Yilarinji is a bad person who is very stubborn and very badly behaved, one who chases after other women and who keeps committing adultery with other men's wives, even though he has been hit by people with boomerangs and clubs — the person still insists on behaving badly and is deaf to any advice, his ears are closed to what other people tell him.

**yupunjayi** thieving, stealing

Yupunjayi, nyulaji yangka kuja yapa ngawu winkirra purrunjju nyinami, yangka kuja kuwingk warrly-manitra kuyu marda, miyi marda, ngatinyanukur-
langu, yangka payirrinjawangurru, wijingk yarnunjukuju.
Yupunjayi is when a person is bad and naughty and a thief, like when he secretly takes some meat or bread belonging to his mother without asking her for it, stealing it because he is hungry.

4. Analysis

For the purposes of examining and amplifying the above material, I have provisionally sorted the commended and censured behaviours into five pairs of contrasting categories: proper/improper, generous/selfish, unaggressive/aggressive, cooperative/uncooperative, honest/deceitful. For the time being, the 'honest' category is empty. The locations of the relevant examples are indicated by terms from the above lists.

**Proper/Improper**

I am using 'proper' and 'improper' primarily, though not exclusively, in a sexual sense. Although the descending order of categories in Table 1 is more or less arbitrary, I have placed 'proper/improper' at the top because the dictionary gives yulkangi and waji-waji as the sole terms matching 'good morally' and 'bad morally' respectively. Both focus upon the regulation of sexuality. Examples at ngawu (ex.1), nyamangu-nyamangu, wararri, and warrura condemn incestuous promiscuity, while the old woman in maju (ex.1) confesses to a breach of the taboo on physical proximity between mother-in-law and son-in-law. Acts designated as 'improper' are more likely to be regarded as 'disgusting' or 'shameful' than the bad behaviour in other categories. For that reason the inclusion of yapa-ngarnu (cannibals) is not as anomalous as it may seem.

**Sexual relationships.** As is well known, incest prohibitions among traditional Aboriginal people are extensive and thus, in terms of proper marriage, highly restrictive. From the viewpoint of any Warlpiri individual, the population is divided into eight named kin-categories known in English as 'skins', only one of which contains appropriate marriage partners. Marriage or sexual relationships with any member of the other seven 'skins' (including his or her own) are regarded as improper. A correct marriage is described as...
### Table 1: Types of behaviour approved or disapproved by the Warlpiri

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type (‘good’)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type (‘bad’)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>proper (decent, chaste)</td>
<td>yulkangi</td>
<td>improper (indecent, shameful, disgusting)</td>
<td>wajji-wajji, maji, ngawu, nyamungu-nyamungu, wararrji, warrura, yapa-ngama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generous (sharing, benevolent)</td>
<td>jama, pukurl-pukurlpa</td>
<td>selfish (mean, greedy, unkind)</td>
<td>kurlpu-kurlpu, liurnpa, ngayarti, puwu-pari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unaggressive (conciliatory, peacable)</td>
<td>jami, namu-namu, pukurl-pukurlpa</td>
<td>aggressive (quarrelsome, bad-tempered, rude, importunate)</td>
<td>jatu-jatu, minjinpa, pardurra, punku, wiinkiyikyi, wiili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooperative (compliant, obedient)</td>
<td>ngampa-ngampa, yalya</td>
<td>uncooperative (intractable, incorrigible)</td>
<td>wiryal-wiryalpa, yirlarinji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honest (truthful, trustworthy)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>deceitful (lying, thieving)</td>
<td>maju, ngawu, yupunjayi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*jukarurru* (also *jungarni, parumarraka*), an incorrect marriage as *wingki* (see also terms in the previous paragraph). The entry for *jukarurru* brings out the moral contrast very clearly. It also suggests an analogy between 'physically straight' (straight spear, direct route) and 'morally correct', the point of which may be to assert that morality is the best way to achieve desired social ends.

**jukarurru**  
*Sense 1: straight, direct*  
*Parumarra, Jungarni.*  
By applying pressure with our feet we make spears straight, as when we straighten them. So that they will be good and not crooked. It stays good and straight for a long time.  
*Straight* and *true.*

**jukarurru**  
*Sense 2: true, correct, right, lawful, exact*  
*Marriages between Japangardi and Nampijinpa 'skin' names are correct, according to law (Dreaming). They are right — as given by the Dreaming. Jakamarra and Napaljarri ['skin' names] those two are also correct. They are both right and correct. As he has the right woman.  
You two are *wrong way.* You married that woman who is not right for you, not *straight* for you. You married that one who is wrong (for you).  
Moral attitudes to non-incestuous relationships outside marriage (e.g. adultery with someone of the same skin as the wife or the husband) are not so clear-cut. I can find no examples that distinguish such relationships from incest in order to judge them separately. However, we can infer from the following statements that adultery when discovered is likely to arouse the ire of the injured spouse regardless whether the relationship between the lovers in skin terms is correct or incorrect.  

kalykari trouble-maker, playing up, lover girl, lover boy, larrkin  
*Definition: person engaging in amorous relations with person other than spouse, thus causing social disharmony*  
jarra-data-palka unfaithful lover, unfaithful spouse

Out in the bush he would hit her, or shear her or pel her with a boomerang. A woman who went off with another man, both her husband and her child would just bear her up regardless if she was playing around with another man. That same woman would be spared by both her child and her husband for going with another man. He would spare his mother-in-law as well because of her daughter's behaviour.

yuru (1)" swearing, verbal abuse
Yuru is like when a woman tells off a man who is a womaniser and attacks him with abuse like this, 'Rotten thing' that you are! You run from woman to woman. Evil thing. You are like a dog that sniffs out all the females and runs after them. You are a real dog!"

yalypirrpa Sense 2: womb, uterus (used as an obscenity)"
Yalypirrpa is like when a man tells off a woman like this, 'You are telling lies. You are just tricking me, you slut. You two, the other man and you went off there into the bush. He's your lover. You are just tricking me with lies making out nothing went on, you lying whore.'

Although the vilification of an adulterer by an outraged spouse does not necessarily articulate the attitude of the community at large, we can infer from the lexical material that marital infidelity is (a) conventionally disapproved, and (b) regarded as additionally reprehensible when compounded by incest.

The immorality of incest is graduated in some degree according to the genealogical proximity or distance between the offending parties. Among the most serious offences is sexual intercourse between a man and his mother-in-law:

wingki-puru Sense 1: immoral, badly behaved
Definition: person who has sexual relations with person(s) in wrong kinship category, breaking especially strong social taboos. [cf. wingki above; -paru means 'really']
Ngukalyki-jangka kawalipurla puyupinjarra yirruuru, kunlarangalu malikikirlan-igu — wingki-puru.
Wingki-puru-kurrurlayirnaru — karntaparitu-jal. After crushing it up they put in a mixture of hair from the armpits and some dog excrement for the very immoral one. It was the women who put it in for that one who had slept with his mother-in-law (i.e. to kill him by sorcery).

Affinal reserve. Propriety requires reserved behaviour between men and their affines. The requirements (entailing physical and social distance) and associated sentiments (embarrassment, shame) are conspicuous if not exaggerated in the case of the mother-in-law.

minyirri respectful behaviour to in-laws, appropriate behaviour to in-laws, avoidance, shame, circumspection, inhibited, embarrassed
Definition: behaviour appropriate to interaction with one's spouse and one's spouse's close kin
Kajikanparra makurantanyanu — warjirirri-jarrimi. You would be circumspect and respectful with regard to your wife's mother or uncle.
wrurrumajura correct, right way, proper exchange, reciprocal gifts
Ngakalpa wrurrumajurruru-kurruru — nyiyuru-nyamu-kurra, ngatirranyu-kurra yilyaja.
Later he correctly sent it (meat) to her [his wife’s] father and to her mother.

**wurdijurara-manji Sense 1**: fulfill mutual obligation, give to one’s in-laws

Wurdijurara-manji, jurdaju-wana karla warlahaku wurdjurrarlku yilyamirra.


Wurdijurara-manji is to send one’s daughter to be with her promised husband and to send things to one’s wife’s parents. ‘Do the right thing and send your daughter to your son-in-law who has done the right thing by you. Send her to her husband that you promised her to.’

**parlparu** (1) unrestrained, unreserved, regardless of others, take without asking, bad mannered, brazen, shamelessly


He shamelessly comes up to his mother-in-law or circumscrire without any hint of constraint or respect.

**Cannibalism.** The Warlpiri regard cannibalism, in the sense of killing humans in order to eat them, as repugnant. They attribute the practice to monsters, devils, and on occasion alien tribes (like the Waringarri in the example for *yapa-ngarnu* above in Section 3, ‘bad’ list).

**yapa-ngarnu** cannibal, man-eater

Literally: human-eater

1. Yapa-ngarnu karlipa ngarrirri yapa kujaka-jana pakarninja-wa ngarni.

Yapa-ngarnu is what we call one who kills and eats people.


It was big, that cannibal was. It went after humans only as it only ate human flesh. It didn’t eat just any sort of thing, but rather only ate human flesh.


That’s not a (real) person, that is evil. It has blackened teeth (from eating people). That monster is a man-eater.

**Generous/Selfish**

While the dictionary gives *jama* as the standard term for ‘generous’ and exemplifies it as a moral good (*ngurrju*), the entry for the related word *yulkinji* portrays a degree of magnanimity and self-abnegation in keeping with the notion of an ‘ideal type’.

*yulkinji* unselﬁsh, generous

Definition: person who is not interested in having a lot of food for self or things for self.

Yukinini, ngurlajja yanga kuja kuyuni myinami *yapa jama* — yinya-ranglu yinya-panu, manu jangku-pinja-panu, manu miyi, kuyu jamlu-nya-mu-panu, yanga kajika-jana *yapa javarri-nya-mu*, manu yinya-puka miyi, kuyu manu yanga njiyakantiki.

Yukinini is like a generous person who gives away anything and who promises things to other people, or one who sees food or meat and doesn’t take it for himself but who leaves it for other people or just gives away food, meat and anything.

The reverse side of the picture is presented in the course of exemplifying the verbalised form of *kurlpu-kurlpu* (‘mean, stingy, ungenerous’ — ‘bad’ list, Section 3).

**kurlpu-kurlpu-jarri**-mi behave in manner so as to avoid sharing with others, not share, be stingy, be mean, avoiding, spurning


‘Why are you keeping away from all the other people?’ ‘No reason, we just followed after that blustery wind — that westerly.’ Maybe they are returning from hunting with meat that they want to cook and eat by themselves.


Yapajukuku.

Why are you keeping away from us? Not coming close to people? To sit with them? You’re avoiding people.
While a tension between generous and selfish tendencies may have always existed in Warlpiri society, some people believe the latter are a product of modernisation:

**purdujurrru** tightfisted, stingy, mean
purdujurrulku — jalangu-warntu-patuju.
They gave each other yams. They would give them to each other as gifts, exchange them with each other. Truly, they would give them to each other. These days we have become stingy — the modern-day people.

It is interesting that Warlpiri shares with English two body metaphors for selfishness — 'tight fist' and 'tight arsed'.

**purdujurrupurdujurrru** [cf. purdujurrru above] clenched fist, fist
Purdujurrupurdujurrru, ngula ka purdujurrupurdujurruru wangka — yangka rdakangku — kjakka pakarni. Kajika
purdujurrupurdujurrurlu — rdakangku rdpupirnpi. Rdukuruduku.
A clenched fist, what is said to be a clenched fist is as one can hit with the hand. As one can punch someone with one’s clenched fist — in the chest.

**kuna-jilyirrpari** thoughtless, incon siderate, selfish
Literally: anus tight
Warlungku karla jurnta yingkiri
kuna-jilyirparri.
That thoughtless so-and-so is making a fire with the other’s wood.

**Unaggressive/Aggressive**

While five of the six examples of aggressive behaviour identified in Table 1 (viz. *jatu-jatu*, minjinpa, purdurra, punku, wilji) highlight pugnacity and trouble-making, the behaviour exemplifying *wiinckyiikyi* is more accurately described as ‘importunate’. Together with the additional examples below it represents a sub-class, with aspects of greed as well as aggression. The implicit moral position is that generosity is a virtue, but people should not exploit the goodwill of others by persistent begging or aggressive demands.

**Importunate.**

*wiinckyiikyi* rude, persistent, insistent, stubborn, demanding [full entry in ‘bad’ list]
**pilji-pilji** insatiable, demanding, repeating
Pilipi is when a person is always running to another to ask him for money, like to one who has already given some to him. After that he keeps on going to that generous person and always runs to ask him for money. That is being insatiable.
Pilipi that is like a person who would ask for everything: for vegetable food, for meat and for other belongings. That is a person who would always come and repeatedly ask for everything.

**nyinparra** greedy, shameless
Mannya kaj warrarda payirnu kurnta-wangurlu — nyinparra.
He begs for money all the time shamelessly — greedily.

**walpiri** attention-seeking, demanding
Jurutu yani kalu-jana walpiri-patuku.
People move away from people who are always asking for things.

**janjanyapa** pestering, insistent, demanding
Janjanyapa, ngula nganka kujakalal kurduurla bitjanjanyapa-jarru kurduuvarik miyiki, manu kujakalal janjanyapa-jarrimi wuti wutikirikilanguku tirakiki. Ngulanya janjanyapanu.
Janjanyapa is when a child, for example, pesters another child for food, or when a man pesters another man for his car.

Another morally anomalous form of behaviour is jealousy. *Kirrkir* contains seven different words for ‘jealous’, along with sixteen examples of sexual jealousy. The latter are largely descriptive, and in
none is jealousy described as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’. An attitude of neutrality is evinced, which may be interpreted in two senses: first, moral neutrality reflecting a judgment that jealous behaviour, though aggressive and mean-spirited, is driven by understandable and often legitimate motives; second, political neutrality expressing a diplomatic preference for keeping out of the domestic affairs of others.

Jealous.

Yirrngirrugi Sense 2: jealous, possessive, mean, touchy about one’s possessions

Yirrngirrugi, ngulaji yangka kujaka nyinami karnta nguraku nyangunu-nyanguku manu watiki nyangunu-nyanguku, yangka kujakajana karntakari yakuyaka-manu manu jaal-jaal-wangkami nguraku manu watiki nyangunu-nyanguku, yangka kujaka kujakangami, ‘Kajikankulu nyampukurra wagami, ngulaji kapurra-nyaar wapirdi-jiylpirruru-manu warungkajai manu parlparuru.’

Yirrngirrugi is like when a woman is very possessive of her home and her husband, and she prevents other women (from approaching) and stops them from seeing her husband like when she says, ‘If you walk this way then I’ll spit on your heads, you mad things who don’t care about what other people think.’

Yumnganjii Sense 1: possessive, jealous


Yumnganjii is like when a woman makes out she’s going away from her husband. She might just get difficult for him and go all around and then come and make out she will throw away her husband’s things. She won’t let him go away from her because she is afraid of another woman and she blocks him by talking. Like the woman throws away her husband’s things out of jealousy and fear of other women — she prevents her husband from going anywhere. It is like when the woman is madly in love with her husband and gets really upset over him.

Although non-intervention in domestic quarrels is the preferred position, disapproval may be publicly expressed in cases where jealousy seems excessive:

Yinkirriya jealous, possessive
Jangkardu-wangkajalurla yinkirriya-panuku — mimayi-wita-wanguku.
They spoke against that very possessive over-jealous (man).

Jealousy between co-wives typically takes the form of allegations of favouritism:

Ngurruya-nya-nyi be jealous of, be covetous of

Ngurruya-nya-nyi is like when two women who have the same husband tell each other off like this, ‘He only gives the money to you. Whereas I never have any money, as though I were someone else’s wife and had someone else’s children. It’s as though my children were from some other father. He can only give it exclusively to you all the time.’ ‘Don’t let’s be jealous. Doesn’t he always give it to both of us? Let’s just be quiet.’

In preparing the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ lists in section 3, I found two examples that seemed to run counter to the representation of ‘unaggressive’ as good and ‘aggressive’ as bad. One occurs under the
term jami, the other under jantukurla. To avoid confusion, I omitted them from the lists and will deal with them now.

Pusillananimous.

jami well-behaved, good-natured, of good character, quiet tame, mild

Jami is a person who doesn't fight or go around stirring up trouble with other people. It is a person who is not a big fighter, a person who is weak and doesn't fight.

2. See jami, 'good' list in section 3 above.

jantukurla non-combative, minds own business, keeps to self, keeps own counsel, mild-mannered, unproductive, useless

Jantukurla, ngulaji kujiya nyinami yapayi kullwangu manu nyiyakantikanti-wangu ngawu-ngawu manu linjarpaawu.

Ngulanya jantukurlaju
Jantukurla is a person who doesn't fight or do anything who is not combative.

Whereas as an unaggressive person is said to be 'good' (ngurruj) in three examples in the 'good' list, including one from jami itself, the example from jami shown here describes such a person as 'weak' (ngawu-ngawu). Although the duplication of ngawu ('bad') has a softening effect, the moral judgment is still adverse. Likewise in jantukurla, ngawu-ngawu is used to describe a person who is unaggressive (kululu) and not a killer, murderer, or fighter (linjarpaawu). As this would normally be among the attributes of a 'good type', it is puzzling to find that a jantukurla person nevertheless deserves a 'sniff of disapproval'!

The difficulty would be largely resolved if it were the case that Warlpiri moral attitudes to aggressiveness and unaggressiveness depend in some degree on the circumstances in which they are exhibited. It is noteworthy that in all the examples of aggressive behaviour presented above in section 3, condemnation is aimed at gratuitous aggression: picking a fight, provocative teasing, upsetting people without justification, persistent begging. What is resented is an unwarranted and unwelcome intrusion into the psychological space of peaceable, autonomous persons. But readiness or reluctance to fight when the need arises is another matter. Non-aggression may then be judged as weakness, if not cowardice, as articulated by the use of ngawu-ngawu in the jami and jantukurla examples. A stalwart performance in battle, on the other hand, receives commendation of the sort conveyed in the following examples of fearlessness. Indeed, as the final example suggests, bravery is admired even when those displaying it are defending themselves against justifiable retribution.

Brave.

kaptopi-kaptopi fearless, unafraid

Kaptopi-kaptopi is a person who is unafraid of another person, one who doesn't get scared of a big fight or a small fight. It is a person who is brave, who doesn't get frightened.

puyarrayarra fierce fighter, fearless fighter

Puyarrayarra is used of a man who is a great fighter and who is fearless, who can fight anyone and who has known many fights — a person who is not afraid to fight.

yarrntu-pi-nyi Sense 2: face up to, confront fearlessly

'A long time ago we two faced up to a big revenge party.' The two men had fronted up to the other armed men. Those two who were the murderers fronted up to the armed men intent on revenge. They didn't look down at the ground as they came out to
meet them but held their heads up high
without showing any fear.

The last example revives a question raised earlier, on what basis for the purpose of translation would we differentiate the specific term 'murder' from the generic term 'homicide'? If the Warlpiri make moral discriminations between different kinds of homicide, they are not evident in the dictionary.

**Homicide.**

*parrika-parrita* (see previous example)
murderer, killer

Definition: person responsible for another's death

*Nyanyi kalu yulyurdu. Kaja yulyurdu
rdyu-barri, kankarlarrakari, ngulaju wati
parrika-parrita ka warnthuru ngarrirrimi. Kaja
yulyurduru yapa jumpa-manji, ngulaju
parrika-parrita.*

They look at the smoke. If it rises upwards, then it means that the murderer is far away in another country; if it moves towards someone then that person is the murderer.

*pukarl-ya-ni* kill, fatally wound, murder, mortally injure

1. *Jummanngku, kurlardarlku kalu-nyanu
pukarl-yami.*

They mortally wound each other with both knives or spears.

2. *'Pukarl-ya-ni kapurnangku waja.'
Warrinji-manulpa. *Nyuntu-nyangu
waniija-warmu kapurnangku kaji pukarl-
yami — jummanngku yartirrlji.'*

'I will kill you.' He threatened her. 'As for your lover, I will kill him on you — with (my) stone knife'.

**Cooperative/Uncooperative**

The main contrast brought out by the examples under these two headings is between sensitivity and insensitivity to the interests of others, and a willingness or unwillingness to accommodate them. Helpful and compliant behaviour is endorsed as good (*ngampa-ngampa*, *yalja*), unhelpful and intractable behaviour is rejected as bad (*wyal-wyalpa*, *yirlarinja*). The example from *ngampa-ngampa* presented in section 3 endorses willingness to work for others as good behaviour. The term also connotes compassion, which forms part of a cluster of behaviours and sentiments encompassed by the English word ‘caring’ (cf. Aboriginal English ‘look after’). The fact that they are not specifically qualified in the dictionary examples as ‘good’ may signify nothing more than that their desirable character is regarded as self-evident. I have sorted the examples into three closely related groups:

**Compassionate.**

*ngampa-ngampa* responsible, helpful, active, willing to work, feel sorry for, kindly disposed towards, sympathetic, kind, concerned for

*Ngampa-ngampa, ngulaji yangka kujaka
nyinami yapa wajampa-wajampa-nyayiri. Yangka kujakajana yapaku miyi manu kuyu
yinyi kutu yapaku yarunjuku, yangka
kajili payirni yapangku yapakari-yapakariri-
li. Manu yangka kajili yapangku payirni
nyiyanlanguku, ngalajijana kutu yinyi
nyiyanlanguku yapangku wajampa-
wajampirri manu ngampangampirri.*

*Ngampangampa* is when a person is very sorry for someone. And he just gives away food to people who are hungry like when other people, who are not related to him, ask him. Like when people ask him for anything he simply gives something to them as he feels sorry for them and is kindly disposed towards them.

*karrnuru* dear, piteous, unfortunate, poor fellow, poor thing, dear one

Definition: expression of sympathy and affection towards some being

*Yarunjuku kalu nyina karrnuru.* They are hungry, poor things.

*luurr-jirri-ni* make to feel sorry for, make cry, made sad for, sadden, attract pity, arouse pity

1. *Luurr-juurrurinsapu ngaju nyuntulerlu.*
You made me cry in sympathy with you.

2. *Kuualpa wita kurdu yirruru-yirruru
yulaja, ngalajiju ngajulku luurr-juurruru
nyanungurlu.*

When the little child started crying sorrowfully, then he made me cry too in sympathy.

**Protecting the weak.**

*jina-marda-ni* look after, take care of, guard, supervise, keep watch over
Kalalu wita-witarlangu jina-mardarnu — wurlkumanu-wurlkumanurlu.
The old women would take care of the little ones, for example.
jaarl-karrimi block the way of, stand in way of, block passage of, obstruct passage of, stop from, intervene, reserve for, protect from, defend from
Jaarl-karrimi, ngulai ngajikarlipanja yapakariki pata-pinyi manu karnta-ngarririmi, 'Yampiwa wiwarpa yaruma, ngauw-ngauwu, pakarninjawanurlu kulunypawawurlu --ngauw-ngauwu, kuluparnawawu manu ngauw-ngauwu jamit.'
Jaarl-karrimi is when we warn other people and tell them off, 'Leave that poor skinny thing alone. Stop hitting her in anger — she cannot fight and does not fight and is no threat.'

Helping relatives.
kunka-jinta mutual support, on same side, back each other
Kulakanpujku kulu-langkuwangkami.
ngayi karntangku warwu-pinyu wajai.
Yungulparli karriyurlayi waja yangka, jajinyawu-jinta-langku, ngamardi-nyawu-jinta-langkurlparli kunka-jinta karriyurlayi'.
You don't have to ask me to fight. I'll just back you anyway. We should stick together because we have the same father and the same mother and so we should stick up for each other.
wardu-pi-nyu Sense 1: depend on, trust, give confidence to, have confidence in, support, count on
Mangarrri-ngiri-langku, nguyu-ngurlu-langku kapola-nyawu warwu-pinyi-kulul-langkurlu. 'Kulakanpujku wangka kulurlangku, ngayi karntangku warwu-pinyi yungulparli kunka-jinta karriyurla, kulu-langkurlu — jajinyawu-jinta, ngatinyawu-jinta, walu-jinta, pimirdinyawu-jinta.'
With food or with meat, two people trust and help each other — or in a fight. 'You don't ask me to fight, I just support you so that we should always back each other, like in a fight, as we have the one father, the one mother, the one uncle and the one aunt.'

ngamirn-kijji-rni help, assist, support, backup
Kulukujaku kalu-jana jurnta ngamirn-kijji-rni, ngarti-pirdiri, pimirdi-pirdiri, juka-pirdiri.
People's mothers, aunts and cousins back them up in fights so they won't get hurt.
warla-ngku-pi-nyu trust, rely upon, depend on
Ngati manu ngamirn ngajju-nyangu, manu ngajju-purlanguwa-wati, warlangku-pinyi karna-jana kulaku, nyiyakantikantiki.
My mother and my uncle and my brothers and sisters, I rely on them in fights and for anything.

Examples of uncaring behaviour, though not specifically described as 'bad', form contrasting pairs with the preceding sub-groups of caring behaviour:

Hard-hearted.
jurru marntarla (2) Sense 1: hard, hard-hearted, hard-headed, stubborn, obstinate, insensitive
[jurru = head, marntarla = tree noted for hard wood]
1. Jurru marntarlaju, ngulai jukka yapa nyinami yulanjwawu, ngulaka jana nyanyiimpja.
Jurru marntarlaju is a person who doesn't cry, one who just sits and looks.
2. Yungka ngulaka nyinami yulanjwawu jurru marntarlaj-nyayini.
One who doesn't cry is really a very hard-hearted person.

Maltreating the weak.
mirla merciless
Panturnu kalu kurulardalu kalinyanurlu wakitarikikajaku murlangku. Kala mardukuja nyauwangu-nyangu kalinyanurlu waampajarrri ngarrakairikajaku.
The husband would mercilessly spear his wife to stop her going to another man. His wife would be almost murdered by him to stop her from going with another man.
paka-paka-rni hit mercilessly, go on hitting, beat up badly
Paka-paka-rni ngulai jukka yanganu-nyangu warlngku paka-paka-rni.
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kultungku watiya-kurlurlu, manu karlingki yangka rdily-parmkanga-wangurlu manu jintaku pakarninja-wangurlu. Manu yangka kujaka kurdungku paka-pakarnu jarntu wijipalkapanu jarntu watiya-kurlurlu rdily-parmkanga-wangurlu. Pakapakarnu is like when a man hits his wife with a stick or a boomerang without stopping, not just hitting her once. Or a child beats up a thieving dog with a stick and doesn't stop.

paka-pi-nyi hit mercilessly, go on hitting, beat up badly

1. Paka-piinyi ngulajji yangka kujaka pakarni mari-wangurlu walingki karnta nyanyungu-parmnit, pakarni murlurdurppka-karda wijini wurrukirdikirdi pakarninjawarnu. Pakapinin is like when a man hits his wife mercilessly hitting her until she is wounded and sore all over from being hit.

2. Nyarru paka-pungu. Wiyarpa ka nguna murlukurrkurrpalu — nyarrpa nyinajawangu. He has finished beating her up. The poor thing is lying wounded all over and can't sit up at all.

murlurdurppa crippled, unable to walk, lame Murlurdurppa-karda, kujarlu ka mari-jarrinja-wangurlu pakarni. Kala karlikirli luwrnu kalinyanurlu, kala yantarli-yirrangu. Kala nyinajayamangka karninjarri. Kala luwrnunin jarrinja. Kalarla kalinyanurlu maral-maralpa parmkaja kuyu-kurraju, manu miyiji-kira. Karta kala ngajajyi — karnuru. So that one is unable to move, that is how someone hits a person mercilessly. When a husband would throw a boomerang at his wife and hit her, he would immobilise her. She would just remain inside their shelter. He would hit her so that she was immobilised for a long time. Her husband would then go off without her in search of food. The poor woman would just lie there.

Neglecting, hurting, and exploiting relatives.

warrany-warranyiya negligent towards relations, uncaring, not caring properly for relations

1. Karinganta, ngaaju-panjaku waja ngarrrika, ngaaju-panjaku waja. Yirna kuja warrany-warranyiya-jarrria — parirwpakur. Yes I am the one you should scold, I'm the one who did the wrong thing. I failed to look after my old man properly.

2. Nganjajku, nganjajku! Warranywarrany-maninjina-warrnu kujaju pungka! Hit me, hit me! Hit me as I'm responsible for his not being looked after properly.

miyalu yulp Sense 1: unkind, uncaring Yirr Ngulangku 1 miyalu yulpangku warrada pakarnu tarningku, nyiyanjangka mayi, ngamirri-nynanu-yarndarpiri. Oh! I don't know why that one always hits him as though he doesn't like him, not like an uncle.

Yuwayri. Ngulajku tarningku miyalu yulpunyirri. Kurduyawu pakarnu. Yes. He is always unkind. He hit his own nephew.

kalakala-nya-nya bludgeon, sponge off, take advantage of, use, rely on, depend on 1. Kalakala-nya-nya, ngulajku yangka kujakara ngatinyanuku karnta wiriyarlu yuntalnyanuku miyiki manu kuyuku maninjawangu wala-jarrimi miyju maninjawangu, maniyi panukurlu, yangka kujaka warngami kuja: 'Ngoaju karnurwa wala-jarrimi miyikiki ngatik. Kapurna ngarni miyji ngatikirlangu, maniyi palkakurrukurlu, maninjawangu, wurru-purlu, ngaaju.' Kalakala-nya-nya is like when a grown-up daughter expects to get her food off her mother and doesn't buy any for herself even though she has plenty of money. She talks to her like this, 'I look to my mother for food. I will eat my mother's food even though I've got money, I won't get any myself.'

2. Yuntalnyanurlu ka ngatinyanuku kalaka-la-nya-nya miyiku, kuyuku, manu nyyakantikani. The daughter bludgeons off her mother for food, meat and everything.

Honest/Deceitful
The inclusion of the opposition 'honest/deceitful' requires justification. 'Honest' does not occur in any of the examples and is not listed in the English-to-Warlpiri section of Kirrkirr.
Speaking true or telling lies. ‘True’ is given two counterparts, junga and yijardu.

*Junga* true, truly, correct, right, straight, accordingly, sure, surely, sure enough
*Yijardu* ngaljii yankka kujiika wangkami yijardu-nyayirni, warlkawangu, manu yimirr-yinjajawangu, manu yijardu-nyayirni.

Warkawangu manu mularrpa-nyayirni. Yijardu is when one speaks very truly, without lying, or without tricking — very truly — without lying and really seriously.

*Yijardu* really, true, truly, actual, right, real, authentic

Kulalpanpa yijardu wanjgawarla nyampjuju jaru, laungka, Yimirrnii yarulka kunpa-ngulga.

You can’t be speaking the truth with this story — it’s not true. Perhaps you are tricking us.

Other examples follow for both terms but, like those above, none includes explicit moral commendation for truthfulness. Given that lying (*warlka*) is specifically classed as bad (see *ngauw*, example 2), this may be an accident of omission. On the other hand, it may reflect some indeterminacy in the moral status of honesty. Disapproval of lying does not necessarily entail approval of telling the truth, since being non-committal may be a permissible and even socially preferred alternative. The potential danger in elevating transparency to the status of a moral imperative is multiplication and escalation of conflicts; and, if evasion and subterfuge are the price of peace and quiet, the community may buy them in preference to moral purity.

Saving self or harming others. Although the following two examples illustrate a difference between lying to conceal guilt and lying to inflict injury, the lexicon does not seem to include a concept of slander.

*Ngarrpangarra-manu* tell lie, speak untruthfully, about, lie about


Ngarrpangarra-manu is when a person speaks lies like about stealing money, or about eating other people’s food, like when asked he says untruthfully, ‘I didn’t eat it mother. I don’t know anything about it.’ Perhaps the dogs may have eaten the food.’ That is when someone speaks falsely, he is a liar.

*Ngarrpangarra* untruthful, deceitful, lying, liar

Ngarrpangarrparluju yimi-ngurruru kurdu ngajinanyu yapa kurura.

He told lies about my child to someone.

Stealing. Stealing (*wijii*), in the sense of taking something without permission of the owner, is condemned as bad (*majju, ngauw*) in examples under *majju* and *yupunjayi* (*bad* list). The examples under *wijii* itself describe a variety of instances without explicit moral judgment:

*Wijii* stealing, stealing
1. Parrakarirlajji yarkkajarruru wijnikiki papulankikirrungu-kurru ngajjana-kurru.
   Another day he set out to go to the whitefella’s place to steal his things.
   He steals and eats the vegetables, the whitefella’s carrots. The rabbit steals them and carries the carrots back to his camp. The rabbit sleeps after his thief.
   Someone stole my boomerang.
   I will come back and eat some, so I will put it up high in the tree so it won’t be stolen. Other people might steal it and eat it on me, otherwise.
5. Miyirriajjja nyampu wijnikku manu.
   Karingantjarriajjja jurtu-manu purulkakku. Ngajjku-palangkuyu yampa ngurrnalajurrtjarrun.

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6. I stole this bread. I really stole it from the old man. From my father there I took it.
Miyilji-jana wurna-kurralku puru-manta! Miyi, janyungurlangu kajika-jana nguna
yngali wiuki ngka manta. Kutakari mungangkaruluku.
7. Steal food off them for the journey! Food, and any tobacco they might have, steal that!
At night when it's dark.

Accidental misappropriation. The following example is a case of accidental misappropriation
rather than theft. It brings out clearly an acknowledgment of ownership, and also implicitly
exemplifies honesty.

wiiji-kari another’s, someone else’s, belonging
to another, another person’s belongings
Wijikari, wiiji kari yangka — kajilpa
kuyurlangu ngunkarla marlu, jangkalara,
‘Ngakurkurlangu nyumpu kuyu? Ngangan ku
puntumu? ’ Karija nyampi wiiji-kari.
Wijikari nyampukurlangu. Nyampuru
puntumu jinjankeriji. ’ Ngayi. Kurlanganta
kajilpa nyanu puntumu. Nyanu nampi
nyampu kari karipu ngarni wiiji-kari.
Nyampukurlangu. Wijikari. ’ Ngari kal
ngarrirri yangka yapakarikirlangu yika
kuyu yalumpu kalu ngarni jinjankerirlangu.
Jinjankeriri yinga puntumu. Ngula kalu
ngarrirri wiiji-kari. Yika nyampuru
jinjankeriri puntumu. Yinga puntumnu. Kalu
ngarni wiiji-kari. Kula nyanu
nyangal. Yalumpukurlangu jinjakeri-
kirlangu kalu ngarni wiiji-kari.
Wijikari is (used) like if there were a
kangaroo cooking, ‘Who does this meat
belong to? Who speared it? ’ It’s nothing to
do with me, it belongs to someone else. It
belongs to this one. This other fellow
speared it. ’ I see. I thought it was you who
had speared it. This is not yours, I see we are
eating someone else’s. This one’s. One
belonging to someone else.’ It is just what
one calls something belonging to another
person like that meat that they are eating
that belongs to another. As another person
speared it. So they refer to it as wiiji-kari. It
doesn’t belong to that same one (who is
talking). They are eating another’s, what
belongs to that other person.

5. Morality and law
The classic Warlipiri ethnography is M J Meggitt’s
Desert People: A Study of the Warlpiri Aborigines
of Central Australia. The field research on which
it was based was carried out in 1953–54, mainly
at Hooker Creek (Lajamanu), Yuendumu, and
Phillip Creek. Meggitt at the time was a postgraduate
student working under AP Elkin at Sydney
University. The book was published in 1962 as a
revised version of his 1955 MA Honours thesis.

Although Meggitt does not deal with morality
as a separate topic, the term appears several
times in a subsection entitled ‘Law’ (Chapter
14, ‘Government and Law’). The relationship
between the two concepts, however, is left unclear.
Sometimes morality is spoken of as distinct from
law (e.g., ‘tribal law and morality’, p.261),
sometimes as an integral part of it (e.g., ‘Warlpiri law,
then, is a body of jural rules and moral evaluations’,
p.251). Bearing in mind that the conceptual
relationship between law and morality is far
from clearcut in English, the first step towards
clarification is to determine whether comparable
discriminations occur in Warlpiri.

The Warlpiri term for ‘law’, according to
Meggitt (p.251), is djagaruru which he says means
the totality of rules of behaviour or, alternatively,
‘the straight or true way’. This is the term rendered
by Kirkirr as jukurruru, discussed above under
‘Proper/Improper in section 3 (‘Analysis’). It will
be recalled that one example conjoins jukurruru
(‘right’, ‘correct’ with jukurrpa (‘Dreaming’,
‘law’) to indicate that marriage rules were estab-
lished in the ancestral past.19 This assertion, we
may presume, constitutes the authority for their
rightness.

Meggitt does not offer a Warlpiri counterpart for
‘morality’. The English–Warlpiri section of
Kirkirr matches ‘moral’ with yulkangi, defined as
a ‘clean’ person who doesn’t do the wrong thing,
like transgressing incest prohibitions (see ‘good’
list, section 3). Jukurruru, as we have seen, is
‘straight’ behaviour, likewise exemplified by refer-
ence to conformity with incest prohibitions.
The dictionary also informs us that jukurruru is synon-
ymous with jungarni, which is among the cognate
terms listed for yulkangi. The similarity in mean-
ing between jukurruru and yulkangi, therefore,
is substantial. Whether the figurative difference
between ‘straight’ and ‘clean’ is sufficient to bear the weight of a hypothetical Indigenous distinction between ‘law’ and ‘morality’ is doubtful. The totality of rules signified by *jukarrurru* is very large. Meggitt’s lengthy treatment of kinship and marriage is replete with statements specifying how fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, and so on, should behave towards each other, what their rights and duties are, and what sanctions are available in the event of disconformity. The rules are said to be timeless, immutable, and sanctioned by mystical origin and traditional usage. As they are not codified, and as there are no judicial institutions to enforce them, it is hard to see on what grounds they could be designated as jural rules rather than moral rules. Is an infringement of incest regulations or the mother-in-law taboo a breach of law, a breach of morals, or both?

A more fruitful line of inquiry in my view is to explore a distinction not between law and morality but between rules and values. In setting out to determine the types of behaviour traditionally approved and disapproved by the Warlipiri, I gave primacy to words translated as ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Used as indicators of moral and immoral behaviour, *ngurrjku* (‘good’), *mai*, *ngawu*, and *punku* (‘bad’) led to the value oppositions of proper/improper, generous/selfish, unaggressive/aggressive, cooperative/uncooperative, and (arguably) honest/deceitful. By contrast, *jukurruru* (‘correct’) as an indicator of lawful behaviour led to rules and conformity.

Before proceeding further in this direction we need ask to whether it is possible to express values as rules, in which case a distinction between them may be illusory. For instance, Meggitt says: ‘It is a basic Waliiri rule that people with food should share it with those who have none’ (p.52). He exemplifies the rule by describing how during a drought members of a stricken community may enter the territory of a neighbouring community and seek permission to stay until food and water are available again in their own country. Hospitality is regularly extended in such circumstances, even though it entails hardship for the hosts; and the guests make symbolic gifts of hair string and red ochre, not only to express their gratitude but to lighten their feelings of shame and embarrassment. To designate the hosts’ response as conformity with the law implies compulsion; to describe it as an act of generosity assumes choice. The fact that Meggitt describes the visitors as ‘suppliants’ suggests that the latter description is the more appropriate.

Similar considerations may apply in the case of ‘unaggressiveness’, ‘cooperativeness’, and ‘honesty’, all of which might be represented simply as conformity with rules requiring unaggressive, cooperative, and honest behaviour. It is worth noting, however, that in all the examples listed above in section 3 the words for ‘good’ or ‘bad’ qualify an actor rather than an action. People are said to be ‘good’ or ‘bad’ by virtue of behaving in certain ways e.g. *Jama* is a good person who gives freely; ‘The man was very good too, not aggressive and making trouble, a good type’; *Ngayarrka* is a bad person who eats up all the food, one who is greedy”; ‘Pardurarra is a bad person who is aggressive and who picks fights all the time’. The manner of formulation thus suggests that moral evaluation is strongly oriented to character traits rather than rules.

Meggitt notes that ‘adherence to the law is itself a basic value’ (p.251), and this is confirmed by the ascription of ‘good’ to behaviour I have designated as ‘proper’. But, as we have seen, lexical analysis suggests that ‘generosity’, ‘unaggressiveness’, ‘cooperativeness’, and ‘honesty’ are also basic values. In the final section of the paper I shall consider whether all five share a common property or function.

6. Egalitarianism and dominance
Francoise Dussart (2000: Chapter 3) devotes a chapter of her recent book on Warlipiri ritual to ‘On becoming a “big” businesswoman: trajectories of egalitarian leadership’. In con-temporary Aboriginal English, ceremonial ‘business’ normally refers to the separate ritual concerns of men and women (‘women’s business’, ‘men’s business’). A ‘businesswoman’ is a person who devotes a good deal of time and effort to ceremonial activity. A ‘big businesswoman’ is one who achieves recognition as a leader in a context of inter-group rivalry, where performances and performers are judged to have won or lost. Dussart’s paradoxical designation of such leadership as ‘egalitarian’ foreshadows her analysis of a clash of values generated
by dominance strivings in an anti-authoritarian milieu.

It is now a commonplace that hunter-and-gathering peoples were traditionally egalitarian (e.g. Lee and DeVore 1968; Woodburn 1982:431-51). Meggitt described Warlpiri society as ‘intensely egalitarian’. Dussart speaks of the ‘egalitarian tendencies’ (2000:36) and ‘egalitarian ethos’ (p.95) of ceremonial life, the ‘egalitarian tenor’ of kinship obligations (p.36), and so on. Given that egalitarianism is an abstract principle, it is not surprising that neither Meggitt, Dussart, nor for that matter Kirkrir, provides an equivalent Warlpiri term or formulation. The absence of a conceptual vocabulary does not in itself prove the absence of relevant raw materials. Nevertheless, if a settled antipathy to institutionalised dominance exists among the Warlpiri, we would hope to find indications of it in the language.

The problem is compounded by the fact that modern Warlpiri speakers have incorporated the English word ‘boss’, pronounced pawuji, into their vocabulary as a loan word. A verbalised form, pawuji-jarrimi, means ‘to be boss of, to have authority over’; and the phrase ngurrku pawuji-jarrimi, meaning ‘boss for the country’, played a role in Warlpiri land claim hearings (Nash 1982: Note 10). As Dussart (2000:200) noted, ‘boss’ is also regularly used to refer to men and women who have authority for the performance of particular rituals. It may be useful then, as a starting point in our search for vernacular expressions of egalitarianism, to see whether ‘boss’ has Warlpiri counterparts or whether it serves a function in the post-colonial era without precedent in the traditional past.

The Kirkrir ‘English to Warlpiri’ section in fact matches ‘boss’ with five terms (apart from pawuji): jamurungurru, ngardarri-kirlangu, yardurr-kurlangu, wati-rirri-rirri, and watirna.

jamurungurru leader, boss, important person, top dog (slang), best, toughest, strongest

1. Jamurungurru, ngalaji yangka kujaka nyinami yapa wirri-nyayirni yirdingurru yapa panungka. Ngulanya jamurungurru. Jamurungurru is a very important person who is the boss of all the others.

2. Jamurungurru kaluyuyanu ngarrirn yapa ngulupa-kutjarnta-nyayirnirli kujaka-

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knowledgeable (especially for ceremonies) person
Watiririri, ngulajnguna kujaka nyinami yapa wati kajyi-nayirin, yanga yapa juju-
ngariya manu yapa juralja panu-kurlu, manu yapa jujuku rdjirirypa nyijakant-
tikaniki jujuku puwarrilypaku.
Watiririri is a man who is very respected, whom people support, like a person who
knows all the ceremonies and who has a lot of
in-law relations, a person who knows the
rituals right through and the sacred designs
and stories.

watirina person in authority, person able to
commence ceremonies, ceremonial boss,
respected person, leader, boss, knowledgeable
(easily for ceremonies) person
Same as: wati-riri-riri

Let us begin with jamurungurrri. The word trans-
lated as 'boss' in example 1 is yirdingurrri. If this
is correct, we can see from the following entry
that 'boss' in Warlpiri English means something
different from 'boss' in Australian English.

yirdi-ngurrri well-known person, famous
person, popular person, worthy person, person of good reputation
Yirdingurrri, ngulajnguna kujaka nyinami yapa kujakalu yapangku panungku milya-
pinyi yapakari-yapakaritji, yapa kajyi-
nayirirri, manu yapa panuku kajji-nayirirri, manu ngururrji-nayirirri.
Yirdingurrri is a person whom everyone —
all the other people — know, a person who
is very sought-after and who is very popular
with everyone and who is a very good
person.

While there may be bosses answering to this
description in white Australia, a standard exes-
gis of the term would be considerably less fulsome
and might even be pejorative. It may be noted that
yirdi-ngurrri is synonymous with jamurungurrri.
The use of jamurungurrri in the phrase 'the great
fighter' in example 2 is consistent with the gloss for
yirdi-ngurrri ('well-known, famous...') but
such an accolade would not normally be bestowed
on a boss in Australian English.

The remaining four terms (ngardarri-kirlan-
gu, yarrarrku-kirlangu, watiiriri-ririirri, watirina) obviously have much in common. Examples for
the first two suggest they form a synonymous pair
referring particularly to commanders of venge-
ance raids. The last two refer to ritual experts
with strong kin and affinal networks who have
established themselves as 'big businessmen'.

How can the meanings of these terms be re-
ciled with the anthropological representation of
the Warlpiri polity as 'egalitarian'? Meggitt's view
was that responsibility for revenge expeditions
and rites of passage (at puberty and death) was
a duty imposed by kinship; that leadership did
not extend beyond the organisation of such activi-
ties themselves; and that the identity of the leaders
changed from one occasion to another on the
basis of kinship ties with the initiated or deceased.
Because individuals were jealous of such kinship
rights, no elite was able to impose an over-arching
authority on the whole community. Even where
long-term leadership of intertribal secret cere-
monies was achieved through diplomatic skills and
perseverance, it had little bearing on activi-
ties unrelated to the internal affairs of the cult.
In short, the egalitarian ethos that constrained
dominance strivings in everyday secular life coex-
isted with short-term, widely distributed leader-
ship roles as well as gradations of knowledge and
achievement in esoteric religious matters.

Regardless of the validity or otherwise of this
argument (Barn 1979; Hiatt 1996), it still leaves
unanswered the question in what terms the egal-
itarian ethos is articulated. Dussart (2000:100)
gave an important clue in the course of discuss-
ing a fine line between control and domination
that 'big businesswomen' must observe in order
to retain their following. Overstepping the line
by 'bossing around' ('bossy-ness' as distinct
from 'busi-ness', one might say) is referred to in
Warlpiri as ngamarr-karrinri.

ngamarr-karrinri boss around, order
around, lord it over, bully, intimidate, pick
on own family, fight own relations
1. Wati ngulajnguna karla ngamarr-karrinri wita
nyanungku-purangkuku.
The man is bossing his young brother
around.
2. Kurduku kula ngamarr-karrinri
kurrtjja yyanungku-nyanguku. Kulaka-jana
kurrtjjarla-wiyi pakarmi.
The children are getting the upper hand
with their teacher. The teacher doesn't hit
them first.
    They only lord it over you others who are small.

Taking into account the glosses given above for jamurangguru (leader, boss, etc) and yirdingurr (well-known, famous, popular, worthy person, etc), and bearing in mind that the dictionary classifies them as synonyms, we might say that the Warlpiri concept of ‘boss’ (pawunj) is an idealised form of its Australian English counterpart. A boss is a leader who lasts only as long as he or she is not bossy. As David Nash puts it (pers. com.), “a ‘boss’ is boss only by being accepted as such, there are only good bosses, a bad boss is an incoherent Warlpiri concept”. In the contemporary arena of inter-group ritual performance, winning (jiyami) depends on organisers who are knowledgeable, skilful, and energetic but not overbearing or conceited. The rank and file are touchy about coercion and ready to contest any assertion of authority as presumptuous. Nevertheless there is a tacit acknowledgment that good leadership is necessary for a successful, well-coordinated performance. The best compromise is to accept a meaning of primus inter pares, or first among equals.21

7. Comparison with Gidjingarli (Burarra)

My summary account of Gidjingarli moral values referred to above (Hiatt 2004) was shaped mainly by experience as a long-term ethnographer among the Anbarra people, complemented by the resources of the Glasgow Dictionary (GD). For the purposes of the present project, however, I follow the same method as for the Warlpiri and treat the dictionary as the primary source of information.

The ‘English Finder List’ in Glasgow’s dictionary gives two terms for ‘good’, viz. – molamola, manymak. The latter is a loan word from eastern neighbours used as an interjection meaning ‘good, OK, fine’. The former is glossed as ‘good, pretty, beautiful, pleasing, acceptable, in state of well-being’. Two descriptives are given for ‘bad’, viz. – werra, gora. The former is glossed as ‘bad, badness, unhealthy, poorly’; the latter as (a) ‘bad (either physically or morally), unhealthy, poorly, no good, evil’; and (b) ‘nondescript, harmless (as of a dog or other creature that won’t bite)’. A search for examples guided by seventy-six likely terms in the English Finder produced only four in which particular behaviours are explicitly qualified as morally good or bad by the use of one or other of the terms in the previous paragraph.

malapachibiyaya look after each other, as in marriage
That way like husband and wife look after each other all the time, that is good – something to be respected.
-gubu murder, murderer
2. Gun-gubu gun-nerra. Murder is bad.
melela gun-gunegiya showing off
Showing off is bad.
morla moiety
4. Abirriny-yuna gu-bol gu-werra abirrinyu-
ni Jowunga yerrinytapa minypa.
These two (male and female) were at the wrong campfire because they were both Jowunga [i.e. they were cohabiting incestuously].

This meagre harvest, compared with twenty-nine examples gleaned from Kirrkirr, leaves us with little option but to fall back on cases where moral judgment is embedded in the English terms chosen for translation (e.g. ‘faithful’, ‘thief’, ‘lying’, etc). As this enlarges the possibility for a projection of English (not to say Christian) values, greater caution needs to be exercised in assessing the results. To facilitate comparison with the Warlpiri material, the Gidjingarli examples are assigned to one or other of the ten categories contained in Table 1 (p. 10): proper/improper, generous/selfish, unaggressive/aggressive, cooperative/uncooperative, honest/deceitful.

Proper/Improper

rouromja obey cultural mores, keep the rules of the culture according to cultural beliefs
5. Gunabibi jiny-yu, gala a-yinmiya mari gu-jarlapa, wurr a-romromijinge. When there's a Gunabi-bibi ceremony, man can't make trouble, but he obeys the cultural mores.

*miliba* be faithful to, stay close to (as to one's own country), continually desire

6. Ngambul miliba. Garlina, birri-boy. Be faithful to him. Get up, you two go. [Said in telling a girl to go to her husband.]

-jurrikchurruk lawless, bad-mannered, brash, a person who grabs food, or talks too much without giving anyone else a chance, or takes someone else's wife; having no consideration for the law

7. Mipila a-jirra achila, abirrinboy; gala aborrua an-gumarrbipa, wurr a bibrinrpy Jurrikchurruk minypa. When his eye is on her, they two can go off together; he doesn't consider her husband, but they are lawless.

-mobula borkka commit adultery against [lit. 'back-of-neck mock']

8. Gala barra mobula ny-borkka. You mustn't commit adultery against him.

-marrambay (a) Green Pygmy Goose (b) Used fig. in expressions referring to adultery and illicit sex [GD speculates about the basis of this trope.]

9. Marrambay awurriny-bona. They two went off on an affair (had illicit sex).

-jurlapa -jirra rirrja want illicit sex [lit. 'bottom (one)-is itch']

10. Jurlapa ny-jirra n-dirrjinga! You want illicit sex! [Said by a mother scolding her daughter.]

-marrarrach na flirt with (lit. 'flirtation look-at-(person)'

11. Murrarrach a-nana. She flirted with him.

**Generous/Selfish**

gopa keep for self, not sharing

12. Balajya gala mi-gopungarna a-workiyana. He never was selfish with his food gopa keep for self, not sharing

13. Gu-gerra wana aburr-negiyana aburr-workiyana rrapa gubu-gopuna aburr-ji. They made themselves big all the time with material possessions and kept them for themselves.

-ngukpelambila greedy with food

14. Nipa an-ngukpelambila. He's greedy with food. [nguk is a recurring partial in such words as -ngukula 'pulverised ground, mashed, minced' and ngukarda 'faeces'; -belambila 'broad, spacious'.]

-mipila mipila na be stingy toward (lit. 'eye eye look-at')

15. Mipila mipila abi-nana. They treated him stingily.

**Unaggressive/Aggressive**

dubuk humbly, quietly, well-behaved

16. Dubuk a-nirra He behaves quietly

-dor humble, quiet, well-behaved, unassuming

17. Rrapa gala barra ngaraark ngaraark aburr-negiyia; wurr a jarra aburr-mola aburr-mi barra rrapa aburr-dor burruwa warlaman wurr a gama gortk. And they must not argue; but instead they are to be friendly and well-behaved towards all kinds of people.

-mardakarrich fierce

18. An-gata mardakarrich a-negiya ya? That man is making himself fierce eh?

-mari-bama trouble maker (lit. trouble (in)-head

19. Nipa mari ana-bama. He is a trouble-maker.

-golja be 'cheeky', stir up trouble, challenge to fight.

20. Ngarburrrpa gala barra ngardapa ngardapa nguburr-burrweya, jamarr jarrapa ngayburrrpa nguburr-molamola, aburr-werranga ngika. Gala barra nguburr-yirda nguburr-golja arnrurrwua gu-gapa goguta. We must not each think about ourselves, supposing instead that we're the only good ones, not others. We must not challenge each other like that back and forth.

-gugolja trouble maker

21. Gala yap a gugolja a-garimurda, arr-yopin. Lest a trouble-maker get up, (and) start talking about us.
**bampa** helpless, at a disadvantage
Like others got up, (and) persecuted them all the time.

**Cooperative/Uncooperative**
They always used to help each other.
yagurrrma agree, give assent to, obey (lit.
'yes-pat')
They obeyed him. /They agreed with him.
gerna deaf, untouchable, incorrigible
They told about themselves, supposing they were wise, but instead they were untouchable.

**Honest/Deceitful**
- *burra* true, real, substance, fruit
26. Gun-burra!
That's true!
27. An-malamola an-gugaliya an-burra.
A good true man.
You went along making yourself strong with the true story we hold.
jugurra - ghabatcha someone for trusting in, a trustworthy person (lit. head-forresting-up-high-on), cf. example 31 below.
-guyolkitya deceptive thing or person, a lie.
29. An-guna nipa an-burra; gulu gugulyitya gu-rrima rrapa an-gugaliya a-yolka a-workitya.
This man is true; he doesn't have a deceptive (story) and trick people all the time.
Many lying messengers will get up and trick them.
bama bu ni be suspicious of, mistrust (lit. head hit be/do)
31. Bama nguna-burnda jinyu-nirra.
She doesn't trust me.
gaypa take away from, cheat out of something, not fulfilling obligation to give
32. Minypa gun-nigipa rrawa gu-bamma-
nacha a-nirra, minypa gun-malumola gu-
jirra nula rrapa gala anangka a-jinyimiyi ga-
rruma rrapa a-gaypa.
Like he watches over his place, like it is a good one for him and no one can break in and steal from him.
-ngumurda stolen goods, thief, thieving
33. Gala barra jin-ngumurda ny-ma ana-
werranga jin-inka.
Don't take another man's wife.
34. Gala barra gu-ngumurda ny-boy.
Don't go thieving.

Although the Glasgow Dictionary is not nearly so rich a source of examples of explicitly approved and disapproved behaviour as Kirkrir, we can nevertheless see in the material the outlines of a set of moral values similar to that of the Warlipiri. If expressions such as 'adultery', 'greedy', 'stingy', 'trouble maker', 'untouchable', 'lying' and so on are valid translations of moral judgments inherent in the vernacular counterparts, we can infer that Gidjingarli culture (a) promotes sexual propriety, generosity, amity, cooperation, and honesty and (b) discourages their opposites. Furthermore, the following terms suggest that, like Warlipiri, Gidjingarli articulates reservations and equivocations about generosity and unaggressiveness:

- *gijermla* beggar, someone who is always asking for things.
yerpa share freely, give everything away to everyone, waste
35. Mu-yerpana a-bona gun-nigipa ruipi.
He went along wasting his money.
-barra docile, quiet, harmless [cf. -dor, under 'Unaggressive' above]
Come (to my camp). This dog is harmless (won't bite you).
(Anonym.: -bachirra)
-bachirra angry, savage, dangerous, enemy, swearwords
(Synonym: -jambeach)
-jambeach good hunter, aggressive
(Anonym.: -merdaberper)
-merdaberper coward, one who is afraid to fight or spear game.
You and I can’t be cowards, cowed and unable to fight.

Finally, as the Warlpiri disapprove of domineering behaviour (ngamar-karrimi, ‘bossiness’), so the Gidjingarli disparage self-aggrandisement (wanenegya, making oneself big, conceited; melela gun-gunegiya, ’showing off’). From different angles, both cultures uphold an ethic of egalitarianism.

8. Conclusion
Although the ethnographic record for Indigenous Australia is replete with information on the evaluation of conduct, systematic accounts are at best inchoate. I have tried here to show that dictionaries, by virtue of their comprehensiveness, provide a basis for theoretical analysis and ethnographic elaboration. The quality of the foundation will obviously depend on the adequacy of the dictionary. A richer account of English moral values could be given from the Oxford Dictionary of English than from the Pocket Oxford. Given the centrality of morality in any culture, the crucial difference is less likely to lie in the number of lexical items presented than in the nature and range of exemplifications. Even so, an element of luck operates. The most useful examples are those that explicitly evaluate the behaviour they exemplify; and it is in some degree fortuitous which ones do and which ones do not.

If we assemble and peruse the behaviours approved by the Warlpiri and Gidjingarli, a model of a good person emerges: generous and hospitable, ready to share, not greedy, acquisitive, or stingy; unaggressive, not a trouble maker, but ready to defend self or kin when attacked; willing to help others and work for a common cause; modest and not bossy; law-abiding and respectful of the marital rights of others; honest, not a liar or thief. As this might serve as a checklist for a character reference practically anywhere, it is worth asking what it is about such values that would account for their ubiquity and antiquity. Probably the soundest answer, one which combines both Durkheimian and Darwinian principles, is that they represent necessary conditions for the health and survival of a human society. Their presence in a robust form generates internal solidarity and reduces internal conflict, thus conferring a collective advantage over rival or competing groups in which they are poorly developed or non-existent. While in theory we can imagine a moral system where selfishness, belligerence, cuckoldry, and lying are publicly endorsed and where mutual aid, peacableness, fidelity, and honesty are ridiculed, in practice any society adopting and actively pursuing such values would inevitably disintegrate.

In the history of human (not to say vertebrate) reproduction, the most enduring and critical struggles have been for resources in land and females. It is in these two areas that inequalities and monopolisation are most commonly found. Yet a striking feature of the Indigenous social order in Australia was a relatively equitable distribution of both. Throughout the continent, land was parcelled out in a roughly even fashion among descent groups. Annexation through conquest was rare if not non-existent, and no one was landless. Small-scale polygamy was certainly practised but large haremms and life-long bachelorhood were both uncommon. In my view too little attention has been paid to the distributive effects of religious ideology in regard to land, and of incest prohibitions in regard to women. Such consequences did not come about by accident. Rather, they were the expressions of a pervasive and powerful ethos in which generosity and sharing were deemed to be good, and greed, aggression, self-importance, and domination regarded as bad.

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NOTES
1. Generally speaking, the views expressed in works of this kind reflect western moral ideas or debates. Occasionally authors have sought to present
colonisation in terms of Indigenous values as well (especially Rose 1984).
2. The neglect of morality as a subject in its own right is by no means confined to the anthropological literature on Aboriginal Australia. Various authors over the last fifty years have seen it as a shortcoming in anthropology generally (e.g. Read 1955:235; Parkin 1985:4; Howell 1997:6).
3. Gidjingarli (Gu-jangariya in Glasgow’s rendering) is the name used for Burarra by the Anbarra people of the Blyth River.
4. Information about Kirkirkirr software for the presentation and use of a bilingual dictionary (first applied to the Warlpiri dictionary database — Manning et al., 2001) is available from <http://nlp.stanford.edu/kirkirkirr/>. The Warlpiri data was provided by the Warlpiri Dictionary Project and was compiled by a team of Warlpiri speakers and linguists coordinated by Mary Laughren (m.laughren@uq.edu.au).
5. cf. Hutcheson (1971:101 [1725]): ‘Moral goodness denotes our idea of some quality apprehended in actions which procures approbation and love towards the actor from those who receive no advantage by the action. Moral evil denotes our idea of a contrary quality which excites aversion and dislike towards the actor even from persons unconcerned in its natural tendency.’ Francis Hutcheson was appointed to the chair of philosophy at Glasgow in 1729. His views on the nature of morality paved the way for David Hume (An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, 1751) and Adam Smith (The Theory of Moral Sentiments, 1759).
6. Repetition of maju (maju-maju) and ngauw (ngauw-ngauw) softens the disapproval. [David Nash, pers. comm.]
7. I owe to Anna Wierzbicka a consciousness of the danger of projecting discriminations that seem natural in one culture onto another where they are not recognised.
8. In my view judgments of the following sort are clearly non-moral: ngurrju good, etc.
10. I gave them only the good horses. Not the ones that always buck one off — I couldn’t give them (those ones).
12. I feel well.
13. I have also omitted examples in which ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are used to describe human ability and performance, though I acknowledge such cases may be more problematic. For example: kawulu-myina-mi be useless, be incompetent Kawulu-myinami, ngulala yangka kuijaka yapa ngauw-ngauw wirriwirriyang wiit ngauw rubby-
pirrpawanguy ngurrinyinyi, manu nyurrilyapa-wanguy yangka karli jarrntirrjajawanguy manu kunuru jarrntirrjajawanguy manu kurduji jarrntirrjajawanguy, yanguka yapa ngauw-ngauw wiit, junturruji.
Kawulu-myinami is how a person who is not clever or intelligent behaves, one who can’t carve boomerangs or clubs or shields, a person who is bad and useless.
9. In relation to totemic estates, kirra are related through patri-filiation (‘father’s country’), kunjunguri through matri-filiation (‘mother’s country’) — Nash 1982.
10. The suffix -ngawu means ‘without, not having, not’, so that ngauw-ngauw-ngawu and majuu-maju-wanguy mean ‘not bad’ i.e. ‘good’. Similarly ngurrju-wanguy means ‘no good’ i.e. ‘bad’.
11. In an explanation of the meaning of ‘wrong woman’, see below under ‘Proper/Improper’ (‘Sexual relationships’).
12. For a brief account of conventions concerning a woman and her son-in-law, see below under ‘Proper/Improper’ (‘Aboriginal reserve’).
13. Jungarrayi, Napangardi, Napaljarri, Nampijina and Nakamarra are subsections (‘skins’). See below under ‘Proper/Improper’ (‘Sexual relationships’).
14. Nakamarra, Japaljarri, Jupurrurla are subsections (‘skins’). See below under ‘Proper/Improper’ (‘Sexual relationships’).
15. The expression jurrru ngauw-ngauw literally means ‘head bad’.
16. Where a word has several apparently unrelated meanings, Kirkirkirr numbers them and enters them separately e.g. jurrru (1) swearing, verbal abuse; jurrru (2) face, countenance. Where distinct meanings are related, they appear as Sense 1, Sense 2, etc. under a single entry.
17. Kirkirkirr glosses yalypirpa (Sense 1) as ‘womb, uterus’; and yalypirpa (Sense 2) as ‘lies, lying, lies’. On the evidence available (esp. example 2: ‘Yalypirpa is what people who are swearing at each other call each other in anger or in jest.’), the term in this second sense is an obscenity (cf. ‘you cunt’) without the specific meaning given to it in the dictionary.
18. David Nash pers. comm.
20. According to Meggitt (1964:176), ‘Away from the ceremonial ground he [the religious expert] was but another member of an intensely egalitarian society, amenable to the same rules as was everyone else’.
21. Dussart uses the term yamarru to mean ‘ceremonial leader, boss’. Kirkirkirr glosses it as ‘first [in order], ahead, before, in front, earlier, in the lead, in advance, prior, older, eldest’.
22. After a prefix ending with n, -nerra becomes -erra.
23. The people of northeast Arnhem Land are divided into two patrilineal, exogamous moieties named Dua and Yirritja. Gidjingarli speakers call them Jowunga and Yirrchinga. Moria is the Gidjingarli generic term for a moiety.

24. The Glasgow Dictionary was published by the Summer Institute of Linguistics and is part of a project whose primary objective was to translate the New Testament into Burarra. Numerous examples in the dictionary are drawn from this enterprise, including (I should think) the following examples in my survey: examples 17, 20, 22, 25, 28, 30.


26. This is meant pejoratively: GD glosses wana-negiya as 'be conceited, boast, brag', cf. 'showing off', Example 3.

27. Durkheim (1973:136) for example: 'the characteristic of moral rules is that they enunciate the fundamental conditions of social solidarity.'

28. Darwin (1875:132) for example: 'At all times throughout the world tribes have supplanted other tribes; and as morality is one important element in their success, the standard of morality and the number of well-endowed men will thus everywhere tend to rise and increase.'

29. Unimpeded by a professional training in anthropology, Charles Priest reached a similar conclusion after a sojourn among the Tiwi in the 1930s.

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