people, so that two people play out the same dynamic whenever they are to-
gerther.

Though it is a scene of considerable sadness, it has a streak of sly humor, as we watch these pathetic souls forgo their chance to savor a moment of rare good fortune and slip instead into petty quarreling. And Singer's biggest joke is on us. Dramatic conventions, and a belief in cosmic justice, lead us to expect that suffering has ennobled these characters and that we are about to witness a scene of great drama and pathos. Instead we are shown what we ought to have expected all along: real human beings with all their follies. Nor is the episode a display of cynicism or misanthropy: we are not surprised when later in the story Herman and Tamara share moments of tenderness, or that a wise Tamara will offer him his only chance at redemption. It is a scene that has the voice of the species in it: that infuriating, endearing, mysterious, predictable, and eternally fascinating thing we call human nature.

APPENDIX

Donald E. Brown’s List of Human Universals

This list, compiled in 1989 and published in 1991, consists primarily of “surface” universals of behavior and overt language noted by ethnographers. It does not list deeper universals of mental structure that are revealed by theory and experiments. It also omits near-universals (traits that most, but not all, cultures show) and conditional universals ("If a culture has trait A, it always has trait B"). A list of items added since 1989 is provided at the end. For discussion and references, see Brown’s Human Universals (1991) and his entry for “Human Universals” in The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences (Wilson & Keil, 1999).

- abstraction in speech and thought
- actions under self-control distinguished from those not under control
- aesthetics
- affection expressed and felt
- age grades
- age statuses
- age terms
- ambivalence
- anthropomorphization
- antonyms
- baby talk
- belief in supernatural/religion
- beliefs, false
- beliefs about death
- beliefs about disease
- beliefs about fortune and misfortune
- binary cognitive distinctions
- biological mother and social mother
- normally the same person
- black (color term)
- body adornment
- childbirth customs
- childcare
- childhood fears
- childhood fear of loud noises
- childhood fear of strangers
- choice making (choosing alternatives)
- classification
- classification of age
- classification of behavioral propensities
- classification of body parts
- classification of colors
- classification of fauna
- classification of flora
- classification of inner states
- classification of kin
- classification of sex
- classification of space
- classification of tools
- classification of weather conditions
- coalitions
- collective identities
- conflict
proper names
property
psychological defense
mechanisms
rape
rape proscribed
reciprocal exchanges (of labor, goods, or services)
reciprocity, negative (revenge, retaliation)
reciprocity, positive recognition of individuals by face
redress of wrongs
rhythm
right-handedness as population norm
rites of passage
rituals
role and personality seen in dynamic interrelation (i.e., departures from role can be explained in terms of individual personality)
sanctions
sanctions for crimes against the collective
sanctions include removal from the social unit
self distinguished from other
self as neither wholly passive nor wholly autonomous
self as subject and object
self is responsible
semantics
semantic category of affecting things and people
semantic category of dimension
semantic category of giving
semantic category of location
semantic category of motion
tapetum
tapetum of species
tapetum of other physical properties
semantic components
semantic components, generation
semantic components, sex
sememes, commonly used ones are short, infrequently used ones are longer
sex (gender) terminology is fundamentally binary
sex statuses
sexual attraction
sexual attractiveness
sexual jealousy
sexual modesty
sexual regulation
sexual regulation includes incest prevention
sexuality as focus of interest
sickness and death seen as related
snores, wariness around social structure
socialization
socialization expected from senior kin
socialization includes toilet training
spear
special speech for special occasions
status and roles
stresses, ascribed and achieved
stresses distinguished from individual
stresses on other than sex, age, or kinship bases
stop/nonstop contrasts (in speech sounds)
succession
sweats, preferred symbolism
symbolic speech
synonyms
taboo
tabooed foods
tabooed utterances
taxonomy
territoriality
time
time, cyclicity of tools
tool dependency
tool making
tools for cutting
tools to make tools
tools patterned culturally
tools, permanent
trade
triangular awareness
(assessing relationships among the self and two other people)
true and false distinguished
turn-taking
two (numeral)
yielding material (i.e., something like string)
units of time
verbs
violence, some forms of proscribed visiting
vocalic/nonvocalic contrasts in phonemes
vowel contrasts
weaving
weapen
weather control (attempts to)
white (color term)
world view

Additions Since 1989

anticipation
attachment
critical learning periods
differential valuations
dominance/submission
fairness (equity), as related
fear of death
habitation
hope
husband older than wife on average
imagery
institutions (organized co-activities)
tension
interpolation
judging others
likes and dislikes
making comparisons
men
more
on average
prejudice
pride
proverbs, sayings
proverbs, sayings—in mutually contradictory forms
resistance to abuse of power, to dominance
risk taking
self-control
self-image, awareness of (concern for what others think)
self-image, manipulation of
self-image, wanted to be positive
sex differences in spatial cognition and behavior
shame
stinginess, disapproval of sucking wounds
synesthetic metaphors
thumb sucking
tickling
toys, playthings