

On the Problem of Empathy: The Case of Yap, Federated States of Micronesia

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Abstract Drawing from research conducted on the personal, cultural, and moral significance of pain on the island of Yap (Waqab), Federated States of Micronesia, I argue in this article that one possible root to reincorporating empathy within the context of contemporary culture theory is to uncover the cultural and phenomenological ways that understandings of empathy and what constitutes authentic empathetic acts are shaped. After briefly examining foundational philosophical definitions of empathy, the article advances a number of differing cultural phenomenological orientations implicated in the experience and expression of empathy. These orientations are understood to help to foreground the place of empathy in what may otherwise be viewed as a general reluctance to engage in empathetic attunement in Yapese society. [empathy, cultural phenomenology, morality, suffering, Yap]

Others are those “behind” whose exterior and inwardness is found, as in me. . . . Naturally, I do not experience the other person from within, but, from the outside, yet not as a mere exterior, but rather as an interior that is turned toward the outside, at the moment even toward me. In the natural attitude I take it for granted that his inner life is not immediately accessible to me. . . . [However], I “know” that the Other indicates his inner life in his exterior to me now. I also “know” that he “knows” that my inner life is embodied in the exterior that is turned toward him.

—Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, 1973

As discussed in the introduction to this issue, there has been a rather surprising lack of explicit attention to the problem of empathy in anthropology. Drawing from research I have conducted on the personal, cultural, and moral significance of pain on the island of Yap (Waqab), Federated States of Micronesia, I argue in this article that one possible root to reincorporating empathy within the context of contemporary culture theory is to uncover the cultural and phenomenological ways that understandings of empathy and what constitutes authentic empathetic acts are shaped. In particular, I suggest a number of differing cultural phenomenological orientations that are implicated in the experience and expression of empathy. These orientations, I argue, help to foreground the place of empathy in what may otherwise be viewed as a general reluctance to engage in empathetic attunement in Yapese society.

It will perhaps seem paradoxical to some that I am turning to examine empathy in the context of a culture where local values tied to secrecy, concealment, and privacy place significant

epistemological, communicative, and moral limits on possibilities for empathetic attunement between interlocutors. It is precisely the way that such limits highlight distinctive understandings and expressions of empathy in differing cultural contexts however that I am most interested in interrogating in the pages that follow. Moreover, a central aim of this article is to demonstrate how the particular cultural phenomenological orientations to empathy outlined below can help to reveal the ways that empathy may be complexly configured culturally even in the context of those communities where it may not be explicitly “marked” (see Introduction this issue). Before going much further, it is important to first at least briefly define what is generally meant by the term *empathy*. I do so by turning to examine how empathy is understood in those branches of aesthetic, phenomenological, and hermeneutic philosophy that have arguably most significantly influenced contemporary understandings of empathy in the social sciences and elsewhere.

Empathy Defined

It is far beyond the scope of this article to provide a comprehensive discussion of the numerous debates in philosophy and the social sciences over how to define the concept of empathy (see Kögler and Stueber 2000). That said, to prepare the ground for looking at how empathy is understood and enacted in Yap, it will be helpful, at the very least as a basis for comparison, to turn to discuss some of the roots of the understanding of empathy in Western philosophy. Perhaps most significant in this regard are the ways that empathy was first defined in aesthetics, phenomenology, and hermeneutics.

First coined by Theodore Lipps (1851–1914), *Einfühlung* (lit. “feeling into”) has long been understood to be an act whereby an individual is able gain some access, no matter how mitigated that access might be, to the subjective experience of another. For Lipps, who utilized the concept in the context of describing aesthetic appreciation, *Einfühlung* is tied to the subject’s (largely involuntary) ability to project her own feeling states into the perceptible movements and qualities of an aesthetic object (1903a, 1903b). Lipps’s views were, however, highly criticized in philosophy and elsewhere for emphasizing the notion of intersubjective “merger” as a primordial basis for *Einfühlung*.

Perhaps one of the most famous critiques of the Lippsean view of *Einfühlung* is found in the phenomenological writings of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and his student Edith Stein (1891–1942). In our everyday experience of an “alter ego,” Husserl (1993) argues, we are never given direct access to the other’s subjective life. Instead, we must constantly engage in “filling” in the other’s stream of consciousness. This occurs, Husserl suggests, through a process of transferring subjective states that emanate from our own “primordial sphere” of consciousness when existing under “similar circumstances” to the subjective life of the other person we are interacting with or observing. The partial fulfilling of the other’s otherwise unfulfilled subjective stream is, according to Husserl, achieved through an initial pairing (*parung*) of the expressive field of another’s perceptible attributes and expressions with

corresponding subjective states that such similar attributes and expressions evoke in the ego's own subjective life.

Taking the lead from her mentor, Edith Stein (1989) argues that our ability to “fill in” and “project ourselves into the lives of others” is significantly rooted in our embodied experience. According to Stein, the individual's experience of his or her body as a deictic center from which the perceptible world is arrayed is the necessary phenomenological basis for imaginatively decentering and repositioning the self in the place of another. That is, Stein asserts that it is directly through an individual's own experience of his or her body as distinctly positioned-in-the-world that he or she is able to appreciate the perspective of another who inhabits a different spatial location and who experiences subjective states that are only manifested perceptibly in his or her body's expressive fields.

A key insight derived from Husserl and Stein's phenomenological approach to empathy is the idea that empathy is rooted in the individual's embodied stream of subjective experience. It is always, according to Husserl and Stein, in the individual's stream of consciousness as mediated through his or her bodily engagement with the world that the image of the other is constituted. The other as he or she appears to me, is in fact an achievement of ongoing acts of my own embodied stream of awareness. To forget this fact is to also risk forgetting that it is within the context of our previously sedimented dispositions, assumptions, expectations, and inclinations that we imaginatively constitute the perceived subjective states of others.

Phenomenological approaches to empathy largely focus on discerning the subjective acts through which the experience of empathy as an imputation of another's subjective life is constituted. In contrast, hermeneutic philosophy, at least early on, situated empathy as a critical site for the development of historical understanding. Such early hermeneutic views of empathy were never naively based on a simple imaginative leap from an interpreter to the original “thoughts and feelings of the author of a text” (Bowie 1998:vii), however. They were more accurately rooted in a systematic analysis of such texts with reference to their history, linguistic heritage, and meaning. These interpretive strategies were further grounded in reflection on the epistemological affordances and limitations placed on interpreters who were working to decipher texts that were often created in times and places other than their own.

Indeed, as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) argued, the interpretation of a given text is centered on working to develop knowledge of the historical period within which the text was authored (Schleiermacher 1998). This is combined with insight into the semantic and grammatical features of the text and an understanding of the life history of a given author. According to Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), the problem of historical understanding is rooted in a more basic problem associated with the ability to understand other minds and their expressions. Dilthey (1977, 2002) believed that such understanding, or *Verstehen*, is always necessarily derived from discerning the contents and processes of the historian or interpreter's own subjective stream of consciousness when confronting another's “expressions

of experience.” According to Dilthey, these “expressions of experience” can take the ephemeral form of behavior, gestures, and talk or the more perduring form of texts, artifacts, and institutions, what Dilthey called “objectified mind” (see Throop 2002).

Significantly for Dilthey, empathy in the context of historical understanding is rooted in “re-experiencing” (*Nachbilden oder Nacherleben*). Dilthey asserts that re-experiencing is an active and creative process that is possible because of the imagination’s capacity to “strengthen or weaken the emphasis of the modes of conduct, powers, feelings, strivings, and lines of thought which are contained in our own context-of-life, and thus [with which] we re-create any alien psychic life” (1977:133). And yet, re-experiencing is always necessarily grounded in a “kind of grammatical and historical spadework which only serves to transpose one who attempts to understand a fixed remnant of something past, spatially distant or linguistically foreign, into the situation of a reader from the time and milieu of its author” (1977:135). For Dilthey, the road to understanding the other is therefore only possible by means of working back from grammar to history to the individual, all the while keeping in sight the influence of the interpreter’s own personally and culturally formed preunderstandings (Makkreel 1992).

When speaking of the concept of empathy from the perspective of its early formulation in aesthetics, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, empathy is not, at least in any naive sense, taken to be a simplistic, unproblematic, recreation of the other’s lived experience. Empathy was seldom understood to consist, in the terms of Geertz’s (1974) echoing of Lipps, of swimming in the stream of another’s experience. Nor was it ever divorced from context. Instead, it included an anticipation of how an individual’s lived experience intersects with particular social and historical conditions, as well as taking into account the perspective of the interpreter or “empathizer.” Common to these views is the idea that empathetic acts are characterized by at least three distinct moments: (1) a decentering of the self from its own historically and culturally situated self-experience; (2) imagining the perspective of another from a quasi-first-person perspective; and (3) approximating the feelings, emotions, motives, concerns, and thoughts of another mind (cf. Halpern 2001; Rosen 1995; Wikan 1992).

Empathy and Its Cultural Vicissitudes

Issues concerning the relationships among empathy, understanding, and history are complex to say the least. What I seek to provide in this very brief sketch of some key early philosophical approaches to the topic is certainly not even a partial representation of the matter. And this is to say nothing of the way that these positions have been critiqued and examined more broadly in the fields of theology, ethics, and history. These are all issues to which scholars with a much greater understanding of the subtleties of such problematics have already devoted much attention and energy (see de Certeau 1988; Collingwood 1956; Foucault 1970, 1972; Mink 1987; Ricoeur 2004). My aim in presenting these perspectives on empathy is a more modest one. It is primarily to situate the at times distinctive ways that empathy is configured in other cultural contexts. And this, as I mentioned above, is in line

with my suggestion that one possible root to reincorporating empathy within the context of contemporary culture theory is to turn to examine the cultural phenomenological underpinnings of understandings of empathy and what constitutes authentic empathetic acts.

Central to a cultural phenomenological approach (Csordas 1990, 1994) to empathy is to recognize that perception, in this case “empathetic perception,” does not begin with, but rather, “ends in objects” (1990:9). How it is that individuals are and are not able to engage empathetically with others is a process that is shaped in important ways by particular orientations of the self to his or her world of experienced others. The significance of such a phenomenological approach was noted as early as Irving Hallowell’s (1955) influential discussion of basic self-orientations in cultural context. In the spirit of Hallowell, and in light of some of the phenomenological and hermeneutic insights into the embodied, subjective, and historical constitution of another’s self-experience discussed above, I would like to suggest that some of the lines through which empathy may be differentially cast within differing cultures may include, at the very least, the following four dimensions:

Temporality: variations in preferred dispositions to temporal orientations in terms of past, present, or future courses of action that may have implications for an individual’s ability to align with another’s feelings, experiences, or thoughts;

Intentionality¹: expectations concerning the significance of those intentions guiding or the consequences emerging from a given act in orienting to another’s subjective life;

Discernability: ideas regarding what varieties of subjective life (e.g., thought-objects, feelings, memories, intentions, dreams) are most discernable, and what modes of expression (e.g., facial expressions, talk, gestures, movements) are most transparent, in the context of engendering empathic acts; and

Appropriateness/Possibility: the appropriateness and possibility for seeking out or demonstrating knowledge of another’s internal states in particular contexts.

These are, I argue, four dimensions or orientations that significantly impact the understanding and practice of empathy in cultural context. The significance of taking such a phenomenologically grounded approach to empathy, I believe, lies in providing us with a means to see the ways that empathy is configured culturally even in the context of those cultures where it may not be explicitly “marked” (see Introduction this volume).

Variation in understandings and practices of empathy do not end with differences between cultures, however, for the degree to which particular actors within a given culture may choose or be capable of approximating these culturally preferred orientations to another may also importantly differ. And again, turning to examine how individuals’ experiences of empathy may vary along these four dimensions may prove to be a generative means by which to understand the particularities of their subjective experience of empathy.

Now, allow me to bear down on these four potential factors at play in the cultural configuration of empathy by discussing each in greater detail in reference to a concrete case, that of

Yap (Federated States of Micronesia), where I conducted 15 nonconsecutive months of research between the years of 2000 and 2005. What is particularly interesting in the Yapese case is the extent to which examining such phenomenological orientations of the self to another's self-experience may shed light on empathy in both its marked and unmarked state in a culture that may otherwise seem to be generally ambivalent toward empathy in everyday interaction.

Yap (Waqab)

The island of Yap is located in the Western Caroline Islands of Micronesia. It is positioned at 9° 30' North latitude and 138° 5' East longitude, about 1,100 nautical miles East of the Philippines and 450 miles southwest of Guam. Unlike the coral atolls that constitute some of its closest neighbors, Yap is a volcanic high island, the result of an exposed area of a large submarine ridge. Yap proper actually consists of four main islands—Yap (Marabaaq), Gagil-Tomil, Maap, and Rumung—that are each separated by narrow water passages that have, with the exception of Rumung, been linked together by manmade land bridges, roads, and paths. Although it is much larger than its neighboring coral atolls, Yap proper is still a relatively small island with a land mass of only approximately 38.6 square miles and a population estimated at 7,391 (Yap Branch Statistics Office 2000). Having endured four waves of colonial governance (Spanish, German, Japanese, and U.S.), today Yap proper is the administrative capital of Yap state, one of the four states (Yap, Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Chuuk) that compose the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), an independent nation that holds a compact of free association with the United States.

Economically, most Yapese participate in some combination of wage labor and subsistence farming based primarily on the cultivation of taro, yams, bananas, breadfruit, and chestnut (Lingenfelter 1975, 1991:392; Egan 1998). In many villages fishing still importantly contributes to daily subsistence. For those who participate in wage work activities most are employed by the government, the small private sector, and those service industries that have arisen in response to the growing influx of U.S., European, and Japanese tourists to the island. For many individuals, cultivating and selling betel nut at local stores and to individuals who export betel nut to Guam and other islands in the Marianas and the FSM is also an important source of household income.

Languages spoken in Yap include Yapese, English, and a number of languages from the Outer Islands, including Ulithian, Woleaian, and Chuukese, among others (Yap Branch Statistics Office 2000). Yapese, a reported first language for over 95 percent of the island's inhabitants, is a nominative-accusative Austronesian language in which the canonical word order is VSO (although there is a class of pronouns that are positioned preverbally; see Ballantyne 2004). Yapese is distinct from either the languages of Palau or the other Caroline Islands (Lingenfelter 1991:391) and has long defied historical linguistic attempts to classify it either as Western Malayo-Polynesian or Oceanic (Kirch 2000:191; Ross 1996). During

the time that I was conducting my fieldwork, many individuals under the age of 55 spoke English well as a second language, and most individuals under the age of 30 were quite fluent English speakers.

My research in Yap entailed a psychological and medical anthropological examination of the cultural and personal patterning of experiences of both chronic and acute pain sufferers. The central thrust of the research was to explore the local systems of knowledge, morality, and practice pertaining to the subjective experience of pain, while also investigating the ways in which often-obdurate sensory experiences like pain can be given meaningful coherence within the context of an individual's culturally constituted lifeworld.

All told, the data collected for the project included: 65 interviews with 30 chronic pain sufferers (each interview was conducted in Yapese and ranged anywhere from 30 minutes to 4 hours in length), the video taping (over 30 hours) and observation of healing sessions between local healers and 15 chronic and acute pain sufferers, as well as 25 successive pile sorts that focused on the categorization of a number of Yapese terms for internal states. In addition, I was also able to conduct four months of research at the Yap State Archives and two weeks of research at the Micronesian Area Research Center (M.A.R.C.) at the University of Guam.

Further data is tied to information gathered during a four-week GPS mapping and oral history project that I conducted at the request of the village I lived in with the help of my colleague Jennifer Dornan. Finally, other interviews conducted for the study included conversations with the Attorney General of Yap State, the head linguist for Yap State's Department of Education, the director of Yap State Public Health, three members of the Mental Health Program at the State Hospital, one of the hospital's doctors, as well as with the doctor who runs the only private health clinic on the island.

Empathy in Yap

There is no one Yapese term that may be unproblematically translated as *empathy*. Two terms that are perhaps most closely affiliated with the concept in Yapese, however, are *runguy* and *amiithuun*. The culturally appropriate response to the perception of another individual's pain (*amiith*) or suffering (*gaafgow*) is to feel *runguy*—a term that has a broad semantic range that at times appears to overlap with the concept of “empathy” but that I gloss here as “concern/pity/compassion” (cf. Lutz 1988; Jensen 1977a). The concept of *runguy* was first explored in some detail in the context of David Schneider's (1949) dissertation, in which he translated the term as *love*. *Runguy* is a complex term, however, with a broad semantic range that at times overlaps with the English term *love*. This Schneider at least partially recognized when he notes that the “word ‘love’ (*rungui*) [*sic*] is not confined to heterosexual attraction, but includes the affection between a parent and child and the affection which obtains between two persons of the same sex” (1949:72). Moreover, he perspicaciously noted that, much like the usage of love in English speaking North American

and Western European communities, a great “value is set on love [runguy]” (Schneider 1949:93) in helping to define family relationships.

That said, in the context of his dissertation, it seems that Schneider was largely drawing on his own culturally informed interpretation of love in his rendering of the concept of *runguy*. This interpretation, I argue, does not clearly map onto local meanings. To be fair to Schneider, I should note that although never alluding to his own earlier interpretations of the term in his dissertation, he did, however, in the context of a much later work, draw on a personal communication with John Kirkpatrick, one of his former students, to assert that *runguy* is best glossed as “‘compassion’ and is . . . not to be confused with amity” (Schneider 1984:33). It was also in the same book, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*, that he perceived, and yet unfortunately did not much elaborate on, the critical motivational import of *runguy* in establishing, maintaining, and contesting those asymmetrical dependency relationships that he understood as playing a significant role in defining so many spheres of Yapese social life.²

According to Yapese cultural logic, it is the feeling of *runguy*, as a form of compassionate concern or pity in the face of suffering, that is held to motivate a husband to help and care for his wife and children (*ma piiq ayuw ngooraed*) by granting them access to knowledge, land, and food. A wife and her children, through their striving, effort, and physical exertion while working on the lands owned by a given estate are perceived to be suffering (*gaafgow*) by the husband. A husband’s response to the perception of this suffering is said to be the feeling of *runguy*, a feeling that is ultimately held to bind (*m’aag*) a father to his children. It is out of the dynamic interplay of *runguy* and *gaafgow*, between compassion and suffering, that titles to land are transacted from one clan to another.

Although devoting no more than a quick paragraph to this crucial insight, Schneider did note that it is precisely “*runguy* that makes a *citamengen* [father] [*sic*] care for his *fak* [child] [*sic*], that holds together those who are hierarchically related” (1984:33). And, moreover, *runguy* is the quality that propels exchange because it is “the motivating feature of the gift” (Schneider 1984:33). Accordingly, if any individual approaches another “saying, ‘*Ab gafago*’ [*sic*] (‘I am destitute’) then the other should have *runguy*, and help the destitute person, who will then be subordinated and owe an eventual return” (Schneider 1984:34).

Closely related to this discussion of the interplay of *gaafgow* and *runguy* is the concept of *amiithuun*. The term *amiithuun* is a combination of the morpheme *amiith*, a noun referring to the sensation of pain, and the directly suffixed third-person possessive *-uun* (see Jensen 1977b). The term *amiithuun* may be used in the context of describing the direct material cause of a physical pain (e.g., *amiithuun ea gargael*—“childbirth’s pain”), in referring to pains associated with specific varieties of illness (e.g., *amiithuun ea maatkbenyl* — “*maatkbenyl*’s pain”), or to index a feeling state very similar to that of *runguy*. Indeed, to say *kab amiithuun ngeak* (lit. “there comes his or her pain”) is to evoke the image of great care, love, compassion, and concern for another. Moreover, the term is also often used in the context of songs of love

in which phrases such as *be liyeg amiithuun* (lit. “his or her pain is killing me”) are used to generate images of intense feelings of loneliness, longing, attachment, and love in the listener.

As noted above, the term *amiithuun* is also often used in ways very similar to that of *runguy*, although, as one of my research assistants suggested, there is an important, yet subtle, difference between the two associated concepts. As she explained in a comment written in English on one of the transcripts we were working to translate together,

My picture of the word [*amiithuun*] is that it is more like a bond of attachment that is painful. I think of it as deeply felt strings of pain that do not start from you but comes toward you from the object that is causing your pain. These strings bind you and pull you back toward that object or person. It is something that is felt both ways and is a bit different from *runguy*, which can sometimes be felt only in one direction.

Finally, as one elder explained to me, the presence or absence of *amiithuun* has significant consequences for the assessment of an individual’s moral worth. Thus, to say *baaq amiithuun roek chaney* (“he or she cares for that person”) or *chaney ea baamit ea amiithuun ngaak* (“he or she has the quality of caring–compassion–concern”) is to highlight a person’s virtuous qualities. Whereas to say that a person is *daariy ea amiithuun* (“without caring–compassion–concern”), is to present a very negative assessment of his or her moral character.

Although both *runguy* and *amiithuun* may at times bear family resemblances to empathy, neither is a clear rendering of that concept. On the one hand, *runguy* seems to bear a somewhat closer resemblance to the concept of sympathy, which Adam Smith (2002:12) famously defined as “our fellow-feeling for the misery of others.”³ On the other hand, *amiithuun* seems to suggest a dual directionality of mutual feelings between interlocutors that may not necessarily be operative in empathy as a self-decentering first-person approximation of another’s feelings, emotions, thoughts, and concerns. Even though there is not one term that is equivalent to empathy in Yapese there are however a broad range of practices, beliefs, and assumptions (at times implicit on the part of social actors) that are directly implicated in Yapese perspectives on both the possibility and value of orienting to another in ways that we might characterize as founded on an empathetic stance. And it is in turning to examine the four dimensions to empathy outlined above that these relatively unmarked orientations can be productively discerned.

Temporality: Time, Empathy, and Action

As noted above, to understand empathy in Yap it is important to detail the role of culturally preferred temporal orientations in the context of communicative and social action. As a case in point, a prevalent communicative norm in Yap requires that individuals explicitly express to others their intended actions prior to setting out to partake in a particular course of action. For instance, in Yap, like in a number of other Pacific societies (see Duranti 1997; Firth

1972), prevalent communicative forms for greetings and partings include an adjacency pairing of “Where are you going?” (*Ngeam maen ngaan?*) or “Where are you coming from?” (*Keam muub u ww?*). This is followed by a response that indicates an interlocutor’s planned destination or previous whereabouts. In reference to the very similar Samoan “Where are you going?” greeting, Duranti makes it clear that,

To ask “Where are you going?” is a request for an account, which may include the reasons for being away from one’s home, on someone else’s territory, or on a potentially dangerous path. To answer such a greeting may imply that one commits oneself not only to the truthfulness of one’s assertion but also to the appropriateness of one’s actions. It is not by accident, then, that in some cases that speakers might try to be as evasive as possible. [1997:84]

And much like in Samoa, Yapese individuals are very careful to provide only the bare minimum of information possible when confronted with such greetings or partings.

Duranti (1997; see also 1993) is quite correct in critiquing speech act theorists like Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) for arguing that these types of greetings simply make explicit feelings and are thus a means for the “expression of a psychological state.” It is important to add, however, that the psychological repercussions of having to think of an appropriate response to requests for information about one’s past and future courses of action, especially in light of the possible moral implications arising from blatantly deceptive expressions of one’s intentions, are quite arguably tied to a heightening of attention to the merits of engaging in reflection prior to setting off to participate in a particular activity.⁴

From a very early age, Yapese children are conditioned to reflect on not only their own action and the consequences of such action but further on how others might evaluate the merits of pursuing such action. Accordingly, these forms of greeting work to inscribe a culturally marked tendency to orient to past and future acts; a habitual orientation to temporal trajectories of one’s past and future actions that plays a significant role in engendering ways to selectively disclose intentions for action to avoid the moral disapprobation that would most certainly arise if ever an individual was discovered to be acting in ways that did not accord with their previously expressed plans.

As Duranti suggests for Samoa, these forms of greetings and partings,

force participants to deal with a wide range of issues including an individual’s or group’s right to have access to information about a person’s whereabouts, culture-specific expectations about the ethics of venturing into public space, the force of questioning as a form of social control and hence the possibility of withholding information as a form of resistance to public scrutiny and moral judgment. [1997:84]

Questions of social control, of concealment in the face of such control, of rights to accessing certain public (and private) spaces, as well as possibilities for empathetic orientations to others, are further tied, in the Yapese case, to the belief that if an individual does not have a

definite purpose for engaging in an activity—especially an activity that requires taking leave from the surveying gaze of the other interlocutors engaged in the greeting or parting—that such an individual is most likely attempting to conceal nefarious plans (e.g., intentions to steal food or medicines from another person or household [*tabinaew*], or to use harmful magic to injure another or damage another’s gardens or possessions).

Greetings and partings are not the only varieties of social interaction that require an explicit expression of one’s intentions for carrying out a particular past or future course of action, however. Indeed, anytime an individual is setting out to make an abrupt or unexpected movement (e.g., standing up to go retrieve something from the kitchen) it is both customary and expected that they first alert others of their impending course of action. Such expectations are especially crucial when an individual is about to undertake an activity that would bring his or her body into close proximity to an interlocutor, and as such is a means to demonstrate respect for another’s mental and physical space.

For instance, in our family’s household I was in the habit of sitting out on the veranda with my back resting against the freezer. Whenever one of my Yapese sisters or mother wished to get access to the freezer, they would, prior to standing and walking over toward me, explain that they were about to get up to retrieve some food in the freezer to prepare for dinner. In so doing, they would often specify in order, the sequence of specific acts that they would undertake to accomplish their particular project (i.e., “Excuse me, I am going to stand, come over and reach over to open the freezer to get some chicken so that I can go to the kitchen to prepare dinner”). Moreover, children were often scolded for failing to alert others to their intended actions and especially for failing to say *siroew* (“excuse me,” “pardon me”) prior to standing or walking past another.

All told, these culturally normative orientations to recalling past and pretelling future courses of action play an important role in the cultivation of forms of subjectivity wherein individuals are able to effectively anticipate the actions of others. Interestingly, such practices also play a role in effectively erecting a barrier between an individual’s personal feelings, emotions, thoughts, and intentions, on the one hand, and their expressions, on the other hand, to interlocutors who may otherwise wish to gain some empathetic insight into their inner life.

Intentionality: Pragmatic Orientations to Empathy and Social Action

Yapese understandings of virtuous comportment, ethical subjectivity, and the good life are importantly based on cultivating the virtue of self-governance, a virtuous way of being-in-the-world that idealizes a disconnect between individual expressivity and an individual’s inner life (see Throop 2008; cf. Petersen 1993). According to the virtue of self-governance, an individual’s inner states, defined in terms of personal wants, desires, opinions, feelings, emotions, sensations, and thought objects, are held to have, in many contexts, a nondirect, nontransparent, connection to action and expression. It is instead, purposeful, goal-directed

thought that is oriented toward the consequences of one's actions on the thoughts, feelings, and desires of others, be it others living in the village, one's family, or the ancestors that is ideally to guide one's speech, expression, and action.

The orientation to the consequences of action and the tendency to go to great efforts to conceal personal motives, feelings, and opinions is, as one might imagine, also central to gaining insight into Yapese understandings of empathy. Given the vigilance directed toward effectively enacting expressive opacity, gaining access to another's subjective life is, when possible, held to be mediated through attending to the perceivable effects of activity. Such an orientation is in fact evidenced in one of the most often used Yapese terms to refer to an individual's personality — *paqngin* (or *pagniin* in the dictionary's orthography). *Paqngin* encapsulates an emphasis on perceptible effects for, as Jensen (1977a) notes, it refers both to the observable trajectories of an object's "effects," "action," or "work" and generally to a person's "behavior" or "personality."

There are a number of important ways in which Yapese ethnoepistemologies are oriented to an emphasis on "effects" and not "causes," as Shore (1982) similarly claims for Samoa. In this sense, Yapese epistemologies tend to value pragmatic (in the Peircian and Jamesian senses of the term) orientations to social action and personality structure inasmuch as it is the perceptual effects of an act and not its hidden roots that are often the preferred orientation of social actors in judging or describing the behavior and personalities of others.⁵ Well in line with this tendency to focus on effects, the morally competent adult in Yap is seen to be an individual who always thinks (*leam* or *taafinay*) of the consequences of his or her action and speech before actually engaging in acting or speaking. More often than not, when an individual does speak or act, he or she is also thought to be ideally speaking or acting for another, and not merely for him or herself.

It is in this same manner that both action and voice (*lunguun*) are taken ideally in Yapese culture to be, at least partially, vehicles of the collective. This is of course is not to say that individuals do not regularly act with personal goals and motives in mind, that they do not strive to better themselves at the expense of others, or that individuals are incurious as to others' intentions, motives, and desires. Again, there are some significant parallels in Samoa where, as Shore maintains, an orientation to expressive behavior and the perceptible effects of action does not preclude Samoans from having "a very lively conception of private experience" (1982:148). And yet, all that said, assessment of others' actions are often oriented to evaluating perceptible trajectories of consequences resulting from observable behavior. Such assessments are not necessarily focused on getting access to the always complex and fluctuating motives, intentions, and feelings that may have generated such acts.

Discernability: The Opacity of Subjective Life and Modes of Expressivity

The values of secrecy, privacy, and concealment that are entailed in the virtue of self-governance, and that clearly inform Yapese understandings of empathetic acts, are further

evident in an often-heard aphorism used to describe individuals who are unable to approximate ideals tied to effective self-mastery over their expressivity. The aphorism, *ke luul ni baabaay*—made up of the third person perfect tense rendering of the intransitive verb *luul* (“to ripen”), the relativizing particle *ni* that functions to embed relative clauses within noun phrases, and the morpheme *baabaay* (“papaya”)—can be literally translated as “it ripened, a papaya.” As one of my teachers explained, this saying is pejoratively used to refer to people for whom it is possible to tell immediately what they are thinking or feeling. In his words, “You just look at them and know if they are sad or angry.”

To understand this statement, it is necessary to know that a papaya is a fruit for which it is possible to discern the state of ripeness of its interior by merely looking at its skin, its color, and its surfaces. That is, the state of the papaya’s “innerness” is reflected transparently in its exterior. In allowing one’s inner conditions to manifest directly in one’s external forms of expression, an individual is thus comparable to a papaya, and as such clearly marked as failing to approximate the virtues of self-governance, concealment, and secrecy.

Yet another person suggested to me that if *ke luul ni baabaay* represents a derogatory commentary on an individual’s lack of ability to manage his or her emotions and to compose his or her exterior so as not to reveal his or her internal states, another phrase, *ke luul ni rowal* (“it ripened, a football fruit”) would serve to represent the cultural ideal. In contrast to *baabaay* (“papaya”), *rowal* (*Pangium edule*, Flacourtiaceae “football fruit”), is a fruit that has a rough brown exterior that does not in any way clearly evidence the state of its inner ripeness. As my friend noted, when looking at the exterior of a rowal it is impossible to tell what the state of its insides are. The fruit could very well be rotten. By merely looking at its exterior an individual will have absolutely no idea as to its relative rottenness or ripeness. As he explained, one of the only ways to determine the state of the interior of a rowal is to touch it. And as a number of different individuals pointed out to me, this would still not guarantee that the entire fruit was edible, for this assessment could only be definitively determined by opening the fruit up and looking at its insides directly.

Although I heard many conflicting accounts as to whether or not the phrase *ke luul ni rowal* is an idiomatic expression, a dialect phrase used in only select municipalities, or merely an idiosyncratic example generated by one particularly perceptive individual who was trying to help clarify the meaning of the more commonly heard phrase *ke luul ni baabaay*, it is regardless, quite interesting to note the extent to which this example draws on the metaphorical play on relations between the internal and the external. It is also important to underscore how such differing valuation of possible modes of expressivity impacts both the forms of, and possibilities for, empathetic acts.

The contrast between internality and externality is at the heart of a number of other aspects of Yapese cultural logic in which metaphors based on the images of surfaces and depths, the visible and the invisible, and the apparent and the hidden are recurrently played out. These metaphorically elaborated distinctions between what is directly perceptible and what is

occluded from view are operative at both the level of the political system and at the level of individual expression (see Throop 2008). Of particular significance in this regard is the fact that within such a cultural logic it is the face that is held to be a key site for possible, although certainly only ever partial, access to another's thoughts and feelings.

The Yapese term *awochean* is defined in Jensen's (1977a) dictionary as "his face, its front." What is most interesting about the term is the extent to which it is used to highlight distinctions between outer expression and inner contemplation or decision making. *Awochean* entails the assumption that behind the expressive field of an individual's face lies an inner world of thought and feeling that is occluded from view. At the level of the individual, *awochean* importantly points to the dichotomy between outer expression and inner experiences. This is especially evident in the context of the saying *feal awochean* ("good face"), which is used to refer to those individuals who are skilled at composing their exteriors in such a way that they do not express what they might be feeling or thinking. This is so even when such individuals are confronted with situations in which their interlocutors might be attempting to provoke an overtly emotional response from them. The phrase is linked to the idea that comprehending another's feelings or thoughts arises from the horizon of perception. And thus, what lies beyond or outside that horizon must ultimately remain unknown. Accordingly, an individual who is able to consistently maintain *feal awochean* is characterized as a person who is able to *ma paag laen ii yaen'* ("he or she lets go of his or her innermost feelings, thoughts"). In other words, he or she is an individual who is able to manage his or her inner feeling states so that they are not expressed to others.

Even despite this emphasis on maintaining an opaque exterior, it is interesting to note the extent to which the face, and particularly the eyes (*laen mit, laen awochean*) are held in local configurations of subjectivity and social action to represent that part of the person that is most susceptible to directly evidencing inner feeling states and thoughts (cf. Robbins 2004:139). To this end, it is held that to *pii awochaen fa daag awochaen* ("give face or show face") can be very dangerous. This danger is tied to the idea that individuals believe that facial expressions may reveal to others those thoughts and opinions that they would otherwise ideally want to keep to themselves. Indeed, as I observed regularly in everyday interaction and in the context of videotaping interactions during local healing sessions, individuals habitually averted eye gaze when speaking and often turned their faces away from one another when conversing. Both of these communicative tendencies are equally examples of the importance of ensuring that one's face does not give away clues as to what an individual is thinking or feeling at a given moment.

That the face is a somewhat privileged somatic site for performing practices of expressive quietude so valued in Yapese moral sensibilities is further closely linked to issues of respect (*liyoer*). It is not surprising in this light that looking at the ground (*awochean nga buut*) when in the presence of a higher status individual is held to be a way to show respect. Whereas in contrast looking at such a person directly in the face is held to indicate a lack of concern or outright defiance (*daariy faan fa togoopuluw ko leam*).

Finally, another, although admittedly tenuous, connection in Yapese cultural logic between inner states and their expression through the face or the eyes is found in the term for child: *bitiir* or simply *tiir*. In Jensen's dictionary the morpheme *tiir* is held to refer to both a "child" and to the "pupil" of the eye (cf. Brown and Witkowski 1981). One of my research assistants argued that the term *bitiir* is actually a contracted form of the stative tense–aspect marker *ba* and the nominal morpheme *tiir*—*batiir*. If this local etymological assessment is indeed correct (which it certainly may not be), the term could be literally translated quite awkwardly as "is eyes" or "is child." When my research assistant first suggested this to me neither of us could quite figure out what, if any, connection there might be between the pupil of the eye and children. After giving it some thought, however, she suggested that one possible interpretation might be tied to the fact that the eyes are generally held in Yap to be a crucial site for expressing internal feelings, thoughts, and opinions, often quite independently of other paralinguistic cues or the actual content of a given utterance.⁶

Indeed, it seems that this observation aligns quite well with the assumption that a child has yet to learn how to control or discipline his or her desires, wants, and cravings. Children simply look at what they desire; they show no concern for hiding their intentions, emotions, needs, and cravings from others. They have thus yet to cultivate any self-governance and have yet to learn to manage their emotions in such a way that there is a less direct link between their inner feeling states and their modes of expressivity.

A cultural emphasis on self-governance, the effects of activity, secrecy, privacy, and expressive opacity does not perforce entail muting the saliency of attending to inner motivation, however. One insight that arose in light of my research on local understandings of subjective states is the fact that the cultural valuation of privacy, secrecy, and concealment also seems to be reflected in a salient lexical distinction that is made with respect to the extent to which, and the communicative channels through which, the emotion of anger is expressed to another. There are a number of terms in Yapese that can loosely be glossed as varieties of anger. Examples of these terms include: (1) *kaf'aen'*—"angry-upset" but not expressing that anger to others; (2) *malaalngaen'*—"anger," "annoyance" or "irritation" that is often undetectable by an observer, that is not expressed verbally, but can on occasion be detected through facial expressions, tone of voice, or the fact that a person is shaking his or her leg while seated; (3) *thung*—"anger" that is readably detectable by an observer through a person's facial and bodily expressions and tone of voice, but is not expressed through the content of explicit verbal utterances; (4) *damuumuw*—"anger" that can be either expressed or not expressed verbally, but is often used to indicate hidden anger; and (5) *puwaen*—the explicit verbal expression of "justifiable anger" (cf. Lutz 1988) that is often utilized in the context of "scolding" a person who has transgressed local norms of comportment.

Although it is true that these terms index qualitative differences in the type and intensity of anger, it also appears that an equally salient distinction concerns the extent to which each variety of anger is detectable through either indirect–nonverbal or explicit–verbal means. Accordingly, these terms can be understood as culturally elaborated linguistic vehicles

highlighting various degrees of explicitness in accessing the contents of another's internal subjective state (in this case their subjective state of anger). In this light, this tendency to hypercognize (Levy 1973) expressivity as a salient dimension of anger emotions in Yap seems to be tied precisely to the prevalence of concerns about privacy, secrecy, and concealment in the context of everyday interaction. Individuals are constantly faced with the prospect that what someone says, or the way that they say it, rarely, if ever, transparently reflects their personal feelings, thoughts, or opinions. Because of the pervasiveness of actors seeking to conceal their thoughts and feelings from others, individuals are confronted with the necessity of having to closely monitor their interlocutor's expressions in the hope of achieving some glimpse, however attenuated that might be (i.e., a shaking leg), into the "actual" subjective state of the person that they are interacting with.

Appropriateness or Possibility: Self-Expression and Attending to Another's Inner Life

There is in fact a term that is used in Yap to designate the undesirable subjective state that is induced in an individual who witnesses an overly transparent expression of emotion. The term is used particularly in those instances where another is inappropriately expressing their love, longing, or desire. The term, *so ulum*, is also utilized to designate the physical reaction that is tied to the involuntary sympathetic nervous response in which the muscles surrounding the body's hair follicles contract, what is commonly referred to in English as "goose bumps" and more specifically in medical literature as *cutis anserine*. Although such a physiological reaction is understood in Yap to be evoked by a number of different causes, including exposure to the cold or in the wake of fear, it is also held to arise when an individual is put in the uncomfortable position of having to experience another individual inappropriately evidencing the emotional content of his or her mind. As one elder explained to me, individuals who tend to speak their minds without hesitation and without attention to the possibility of making their interlocutors feel *so ulum* are said to be *dar k'adkaed ea thiin u lunguun*—"words do not cause itchiness in his or her mouth." That is, there is nothing about speaking their mind that makes them feel uncomfortable.

I should add, that the use of *so ulum* as indexical of the discomfort that is felt in the face of inappropriately displayed emotion is not merely a metaphorical elaboration on this physiological reaction. It is instead reported by individuals to be directly experienced first hand as an embodied subjective state. For instance, there were a number of occasions where I heard individuals use the term while also gesturing to bring attention to the raised flesh on their arms while simply recalling situations in which an individual failed to live up to local expectations for expressive quietude and muted emotional expressivity. In fact, during the context of my interviews there were often times when my research assistants felt *so ulum* when hearing more personal details of a given individual's life. In one notable case, one of my research assistants was so distraught from hearing a very emotional retelling of an individual's experience of losing a child that she had to physically remove herself from the

interview. Later I discovered that she had become not only so *ulum* but also physically ill as a result of this particularly emotional telling.

That there are such pressures to maintain a nontransparent rendering of one's inner life is not to say, therefore, that individuals are not interested in determining the content of others' subjective states. Indeed, even despite the difficulty in determining others' motives for action, or perhaps in spite of it, there was also clearly much recognition by the people that I knew best that there is much of importance that is missed when an individual does not attempt to imagine what the possible motives for a particular individual's actions might be. In Yap, where motivation is seldom directly asked of another and where it is also seldom freely expressed in the first person, gossip about others' feelings, intentions, motives, and reactions is a central part of everyday talk and interaction. Indeed, it is in the context of third-person discourse in the form of gossip that a great deal of attention is devoted to analyzing motives for action. Instead of asking another directly why he or she did or did not act in a specific way, individuals instead wait to covertly speculate with others about the reasons behind, and the consequences of, that person's observed behavior.

There has been much written on the social import of gossip in Pacific cultures (see Besnier 1989, 1990, 1994; Brenneis 1984a, 1984b; Brison 1992; Firth 1967). This work has done much to reveal the key role that gossip plays in ongoing dynamics of conflict and affiliation, while further highlighting its relation to truth telling and the ways in which it may be put to use as a form of resistance. It is not my intention to speak at length about the broader role of gossip in Yapese society or to enter in to an explicit dialogue with this existing literature on the topic. Instead, I would simply like to point to the ways in which gossip often serves as a privileged means for interlocutors to speculate on otherwise hidden aspects of social actors' motivations, thoughts, feelings, and opinions. An excellent example of this use of gossip in everyday talk to speculate on a third-party's motives for acting, as well as their subjective responses in the face of others' actions, can be seen in the following stretch of talk.

This excerpt is taken from an audiotaped conversation that occurred between myself (JT) and two older women (AA, AB) about a disruption that occurred during a Christmas church service in which a drunken man (DM) had entered the community church, and walked aggressively toward the priest (*padre*), all the while shouting largely incoherent statements to the congregation. Before anything too drastic happened, the man's aunt (DG) stood up and escorted him from the church. A few minutes later, however, a cloth depicting Jesus that was hung in the back of the church fell to the ground for no apparent reason. The following transcribed stretch of talk occurred a few days after the event. In it two older women who had also been present with me at the service discuss what the *Padre* may have been feeling during the disruption. Note that I have bolded the sections in translation in which there is explicit discussion of attempting to discern the *Padre*'s feelings and thoughts during the event.⁷

001 AA: Gube yan gu saap nga laen mit facha ii padre ya gube taafinay naag
I went to look at the face of the padre because I was thinking

002 *uug gaar maang ea bayi yoeg ea chaqaney ea . . . ri baye damumuuw.*
 he will reveal what that person was saying . . . **he would be angry**

003 **AB:** *Maachnea gam naang ni faani noon make thile ton rok padrey ke thile lunguun*
 But you know that **when he spoke the padre's tone changed, he**
changed his voice

004 *ke thile to' (???) . . . ke . . . wun'ug ke dake keyan lunguun nga buut ke* ((nervous laughter))
 he changed to (tone???) . . . he . . . in my mind **his voice went lower** (in pitch) . . . he
 ((nervous laughter))

005 *gummaang nike gin padre.*
I think that it startled the padre

006 **JT:** *Umm, . . . sanaa ke gin*
 Umm, . . . maybe he was startled

007 **AA:** *ii chanem . . . Gube leam naag . . .*
 that person . . . I am thinking.

008 **AB:** *Sanaa ke gin, fa ke rus fa, gur ra damumuuw fa . . .*
Maybe he was startled, or he was scared, or, I would be angry or

009 **AA:** *Ka damumuuw daabiy rus, Ka damumuuw.*
He was angry not scared, he was angry

010 **JT:** *Umm.*
 Umm.

011 **AA:** *Nen gube taafinay naag ea gube wonder ko faanmanga ngaki paer ea chaqaneam*
ii DM
 The thing I was thinking, that **I was wondering what reason DM**
had for staying (in the church)

012 *ma maang ea rariin ea chaqaneam ii padre . . . ii DG faram ea muguy—*
 and what will padre do . . . **DG (DM's aunt)** is soft (implying quiet, not aggressive)

013 *maachnea DG ea be nen ma bee roek,*
 but **DG** she is the one that is responsible

014 **JT:** *Umm.*

Umm.

015 **AA:** *Gam naang faram u glasia . . . DG . . . yibe altar ngeki koel paa facha ii DG,*
You know that church . . . **DG** . . . she came to the altar and **DG** took
his (**DM**'s) hand

016 *man nga wen, man ngawen, kenoon nike damumuww, ere yu (???) . . .*
she went outside, she went outside, she spoke that she was angry, so
(???)

017 **AB:** *Ma bineme ea ba chingaaw, ere gag ea kug worry naag padre.*
But that (was because) he was drunk, so that is why I was worried for
padre.

018 *Nug gaara ri ni lii' padre fa fa mange ka buuch ku padre?*
My mind said that he will beat padre or, or, what will happen to
padre?

019 *Ra damumuww, fange rus fa maang . . .*
He will be angry, or scared or what . . .

020 **AB:** *Maachnea faani muul fare gi kegin fare gi re nem ni aaw nga buut megin*
But when that cloth (of Jesus) fell to the ground **he was startled.**

021 **AA:** *Me gin.*
He was startled.

As this brief interaction exemplifies, gossip provides an important and recurrent site for individuals to collaboratively discuss possible motives for a third party's activity as well as the possible emotional reactions of interlocutors engaged in and affected by such activity. Of particular interest here is the fact that in lines 001, 003, and 004 we have examples of individuals looking to the face and to other paralinguistic cues (e.g., the tone of voice) rather than to the explicit content of talk or the situation itself to determine the possible feeling states of another. Also of note is that in lines 002, 005, 008, 009, 011, 019, 020, and 021 there are explicit discussions of the possible feelings states of the Padre as well as the possible motivations or intentions behind DM's behavior. Again, an ethic of self-governance and expressive opaqueness does not thus perforce entail a lack of interest in trying to determine the contents of other minds.

Conclusion

In discussing Yapese configurations of empathy in relation to the four orientations of temporality, intentionality, discernability, and appropriateness or possibility, I hope to have demonstrated the complex ways that empathy may be conceived of at even just an ideal cultural level. This, of course, says nothing of personal orientations to empathy, nor the dynamic ways that empathy may be employed, enacted, or resisted in real-time interaction. That said, I believe that at the very least I have illuminated one possible way in which anthropologists might reengage explicitly with the problem of empathy. As anthropologists our task becomes one of first discerning how cultural orientations to understanding other hearts and minds are first configured. It is then one of attempting to understand how such orientations are played out in real time in ongoing interaction. As both phenomenologists and hermeneutic philosophers have attested, our own very capacity to develop cultural and historical understanding is arguably predicated on these capacities at cultivating an openness to, and thus approximating, but, never reaching the subjective stance of another, who is forever removed from, and yet constituted within, our own individual sphere of awareness.

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Notes

1. I use the term *intentionality* in both its everyday usage as planned, goal-directed, or deliberate action and in terms of its more rigorous phenomenological definition as consciousness directed toward an intentional object (Husserl 1962; Jacquette 2004; see also Duranti 1993, 2001, 2006).
2. I should note that in Yap there are a number of terms, aside from *runguy*, that overlap, at least to some degree, with those semantic fields encompassed by the English term *love*. For instance, there is the term *adaag*, which refers to anything from “liking” to “wanting” to “desiring,” and which can be used equally for objects and people. *Tufeg*, which connotes a form of “cherishing” and “caring,” and is often used to describe an individual’s actions, and not necessarily his or her feelings. There is also the term *taawureeng*, which is more closely related to *runguy* and which is used to refer to those feelings invoked when one is separated from one’s spouse, lover, close friend, relative, community, and so forth. In addition, there is the term *amiithuun*, which I will discuss in more detail below, that can literally be translated as “pain of,” and that refers primarily to feelings of attachment, care, and love for one’s village or one’s community. Interestingly, however, despite these various terms that resonate to some extent with the concept of “love,” I often witnessed individuals switching to English when they sought to express their feelings of love or caring for another. For instance, it was very common to hear parents and children alike tell each other “love you.”
3. It is interesting to note, however, how much Adam Smith’s more detailed discussion of “sympathy” resonates with some of the aesthetic, phenomenological, and hermeneutic understandings reviewed above. According to Smith

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. . . . It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. [2002:11–12]

4. In addition to “Where are you coming from?” and “Where are you going?,” greetings and partings could also include the use of the first adjacency pair part *keam magaer* (“you are exhausted–tired–fatigued from expending effort on behalf of another”) and a second pair part, *daariy* (“there was no such effort expended”). Or the adjacency reduplicative pairing of the greeting *moegeathiin*, with the response *moegeathiin*. *Mogeathiin* can literally be translated as a second person directive to “say something” (the phrase is constructed from *moeg*, which is the second person form of the irregular transitive verb *yoeg*, “to say,” the noun phrase connector *ea*, and the noun *thiin*, which Jensen [1977a] defines as “language, speech, conversation, word”). In the former case, the addressee is recognized as having engaged in some prior intentional work-based activity, a designation that highlights the valuation of undertaking purposive action. In the latter case, the addressee is faced with a request to speak of his or her current situation, which implies again that they should express their motives for engaging in a particular activity or for moving from one particular location to another.

5. As Charles Sanders Peirce (1992:132) explains in “How to Make our Ideas Clear,” pragmatism (or what he later referred to as pragmaticism) should “Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conceptions to have. Then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object.” William James similarly argues in “What Pragmatism Means” that:

To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve—what sensations we are to expect from it and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all. [James 1995:18]

6. In their cross-linguistic analysis of high frequency figurative labels for body parts Brown and Witkowski (1981:599) include Yapese as an example of those languages that utilize a figurative label equating the pupil of the eye with a human child. Citing Tagliavina (1949), they speculate that “expressions equating small humans with the pupil are responses to the similarity between a child and the minute figures of persons reflected in the eye” (Brown and Witkowski 1981:601). Overall, they argue that that there are three types of constraints that “appear to work simultaneously and in interrelated ways to channel production of labels for marked body parts along similar paths in different languages. Lexical considerations, physical world/perceptual givens, and context and use conditions combine to produce regularly occurring naming results” (Brown and Witkowski 1981:607).

7. This stretch of talk was transcribed by myself and my field assistant Sheri Manna. The translation is mine. The transcription conventions used here are slightly modified from Sacks et al. (1974) whereby:

((sits down)) Material between double parentheses provides extra-linguistic information, such as gestures, bodily movements, positioning etc., as well paralinguistic information such as volume.

- (pain) Words between parentheses in the English translation indicates information that is understood by native speakers but is not explicitly stated in the Yapese morphemes
 (???) Question marks inside of parentheses marks inaudible talk
 . . . Three dots indicate an un-timed pause in speech
 F: Initials for speakers are separated from their utterances by colons.

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