

Geoffrey M. White and John Kirkpatrick, eds., *Person, Self and Experience: Exploring Pacific Ethnopsychologies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. Pp. vii, 433. \$38.00 hardcover; \$11.95 paper.

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It began, in a sense, with Malinowski's dictum about grasping the native point of view, was continued after an interval with ethnoscience, and now burgeons into ethno-whatever-you-like. The discovery that peoples around the world have their own forms of self-understanding seems to have penetrated the minds of anthropologists about the same time as they also realized the need for reflexivity, recognizing that we cannot understand "others" unless we also understand ourselves. This exciting collection of essays contributes greatly to this birth of consciousness. The various contributors make good sense of the handling of social relations in Pacific societies via the people's own theories of "the emotions," and in so doing they establish some important generalizations. More: there is a feeling of liveliness, of "discovery" itself, about the whole book, suggesting both that we are here at a cutting edge of the discipline and that those who are doing the cutting are enjoying themselves.

Probably the one most significant overall point is made by the editors in their thoughtful and balanced introductory review. They begin by noting (p. 4) that questions of meaning of behavior are prior to those of explanation. (Not everyone would accept this view, but it is one to which cultural anthropologists are at the least inclined.) In pursuit of local meanings it is not necessary to deny the possible existence of psychological universals (p. 15), but the latter cannot be assumed to fit exactly with the former. We must, as the authors in the book do, "situate

ideas of personhood, shame, and the like in relation to social organizations and universes of discourse in which they are pertinent to actors" (p. 8). All this corresponds closely enough to ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. But from it emerges the perspective that whereas in Western discourse we tend to think of emotions as private to the individual, in Pacific cultures discourse focuses instead on emotions as lying in between people, in their relationships. Emotions are not personal, but interpersonal, and therefore become an integral part of the handling of social relations in general. Thus compassion and shame, for example, may not be so much states of feeling in particular persons as "enunciated as shared or generalized in a social network" (p. 11).

Several of the individual contributions to this volume make essentially the same point. It is not just that the emotions are "culturally constructed" and therefore not semantically isomorphic across cultures. Perhaps we may put it as Lutz does in her chapter on Ifaluk, where she says that according to Ifaluk ideas the responsibility for one's internal state lies not with oneself, but with others whose behavior is held to trigger one's own (p. 57). Such a notion operates powerfully in customary law in relation to questions of compensation. It is definitely found in Mount Hagen in Papua New Guinea, where my fieldwork has been done, and is a source of difference in viewpoint between Hagen people and expatriates. Kirkpatrick, in his chapter on the Marquesas, sums up this same perspective by saying that "persons are known in and through interaction," hence the great stress in these cultures on public performances in which "selves" are displayed and social agency is embodied (p. 109).

One of the striking correlates of this viewpoint is that people will deny they know how other people are "feeling." This is another theme that echoes through these essays. At first sight it might appear to deny the point made above. If feelings are not known, is it because they are private and therefore unknowable? Not quite. What the actors mean when they say this is that feelings do not attain an ascertainable reality until they are expressed definitely as action and pointed out as such within the social network. Two examples of how this works can be given.

The first is from Eleanor Gerber's chapter on Samoa, "Rage and Obligation: Samoan Emotion in Conflict." This chapter is particularly interesting, both theoretically and ethnographically, because it bears on the famous Mead/Freeman debate. Mead found that Samoans would not give character sketches of fellow household members, and she concluded that they had little understanding of others' behavior. It turns

out, however, that the Samoans were better philosophical phenomenologists than was Mead. Gerber found that the question had to be rephrased as "Why do you think, in your own mind, that he/she did this?" If one asks "Why did so-and-so do it?" the answer is just "I don't know," because "we cannot know what is in another person's depths" (p. 133). But we can make guesses about it from our own ideas; thus, in a sense, a level of feeling *is* recognized as private, but knowledge of it can be based on observable action. I was delighted to read this because, again, it can be paralleled *exactly* from both the Highlands areas of Papua New Guinea that I know, Hagen and Pangia. Here we find some, perhaps, unexpected continuities across the Melanesia/Polynesia/Micronesia divisions of the Pacific. And as the essays abundantly demonstrate, such matters are not ethnographically trivial but vitally important.

Exactly the same thing is found in Schieffelin's typically elegant sketch of Kaluli ethnopsychology. First, he chooses to discuss the set of "anger, grief, and shame," which in one way or another underlies many of the accounts of salient emotions in Pacific cultures; so, once more, a kind of comparability emerges across the grain of specificity. And second, he notes that despite the apparent ease with which Kaluli display emotions in interaction, when asked about them they are likely to profess agnosticism: "I don't know. How is one to know how another man feels?" Yet this does not mean that they are actually unable to interpret one another's behavior. It does mean that they are reluctant specifically to attribute emotion to another verbally, because "making speculative attributions about other people's feelings, like spreading misinformation, amounts to spreading mischievous . . . gossip" (p. 174). So the "legal" context comes into play again.

There are nine ethnographic papers in this volume: two on Micronesia (Ifaluk, Tobi), three on Polynesia (Marquesas, Samoa, Hawaii), and four on Melanesia (Kaluli, Bimin-Kuskusmin, Baining, and A'ara in the Solomons). They are clustered under the headings of "Identity, Emotion, and Social Process" and "Person, Deviance and Illness," but in fact continuities run from study to study in much the same way as the studies themselves suggest emotions do in these cultures. At the same time each essay takes up some stance of its own. Catherine Lutz, on Ifaluk, challenges the preconception that an ethnopsychology is to be regarded as a "folk" or "unscientific" picture by comparison with Western psychology. John Kirkpatrick, on the Marquesas, criticizes effectively the label "shame culture" that has been used in earlier work. Like most of the contributors he proposes instead to start from "inside" the culture

and "map some of the coherence Marquesans find in their accounts of human action" (p. 83). Gerber takes a rather different tack. She accepts a panhuman biological basis of affect and attempts to compare Samoan cultural emotions against this substrate (e.g, p. 142). She identifies fear of the father as an internal source of control as well as "shame," and links this to patterns of violence. Schieffelin stresses the importance of the idea of reciprocity in the dynamic interrelation of the culturally constructed emotions of anger, grief, and shame among the Kaluli. Assertive postures are favored, but they should be in proportion to "loss"; and if anger does not work there may be an appeal instead to compassion by displaying grief. Poole (who seems to have an inexhaustible set of field data and can contribute long essays to almost every symposium) gives a detailed analysis of how children grow into personhood among Bimin-Kuskusmin-- a matter of concern to the people themselves, partly because there is a high rate of infant mortality. These people have highly complex gender constructs, and Poole's discussion here shows the ontogenesis of these.

Peter Black's chapter on "Ghosts, Gossip, and Suicide" on Tobi island opens the set of papers that focus on deviance and illness. He describes a case history of an apparent attempted suicide and discusses this in relation to the concepts of fear, shame, and anger as motivational constructs in Tobian culture. He argues that whereas the people themselves stress fear of authority as a reason for action, shame as a result of gossip is at least as powerful. He also has a moving discussion of the place of empathy in fieldwork. Karen Ito's chapter on affective bonds in Hawaii stresses the "affiliative nature of interpersonal relations" (p. 303). Could this have become more a conscious model as native Hawaiians were swamped over time by others? Exchanges of material things are signs of exchanging emotions (p. 307). Self-interest is seen as "retentive" and causing an escalation of hurt feelings and anger between people in conflict. De-escalation can only be achieved by "yielding." Such traditional ideas have actually been reworked into an explicit technique for conflict resolution by the Hawaiian Cultural Committee (p. 315). Exchanges of apology and forgiveness are made to set relationships right, rather than a "control of deviance" model being applied. This "egalitarian" way of doing things may be a modern Hawaiian phenomenon. In the past, if chiefs were important, they would surely exercise some authoritative control. Geoffrey White, in his chapter on the A'ara, specifically notes changes that have come with the loss of effective chieftainship and ancestor worship. He also analyzes his linguistic data in terms of the well-known dimensions of solidarity/conflict and dominance/submis-

sion, and points out the overall concern for solidarity which the A'ara display. He has some nice ethnography on the portrayal of the character of ancestors here, stressing that they are embodiments of desired cultural values. The "concern" for social relations and perhaps their "vulnerability" (to use a "dead" metaphor from our own Western folk repertoire) shows strongly in the A'ara theories of sickness: "Not only may hostile actions of others, or one's own actions or feelings, make one sick but one may suffer illness directly from social conflict and/or bad feelings among significant others. Thus, it is said that if a husband and wife are continually arguing and fighting, it is likely that their child will suffer persistent illness. Children are regarded as particularly vulnerable to the social causes of illness" (p. 350). (There is every likelihood, indeed, that objectively they *are* vulnerable in this way.) I have quoted this observation in full because of the *deja vu* effect it had on me: once more, it could have been taken out of an article I had written myself about Mount Hagen; the parallel is exact.

The last substantive chapter in the volume is by Jane Fajans on the Baining. Here we find another twist. The Baining seem to be ethno-Radcliffe-Brownians, grounding their descriptions not in terms of personal experience but on aspects of social roles (p. 371). This appears to be rather different from the rest of the peoples discussed in the book. The Baining even have Radcliffe-Brown's "sentiments." But is there a real difference here? These "sentiments" are actually rather like what other contributors speak of as the intersubjective locus of emotion. In substantive, ethnographic terms Fajans's contribution lies in her treatment of shame, and starts from the paradox that Baining say adopted children are their "true" children and they are "ashamed" of their natural children (p. 376): one of those fascinating reversals of what we might think "natural." This claim privileges the "social" against the "natural," and as Fajans points out "shame" occurs when the lower order (nature) intrudes into the higher (culture). Despite this, idiosyncratic behavior "is fairly easily tolerated among the Baining" (p. 384), and there is also a large corpus of narratives about encounters with spirits and how these can make people crazy or sick (pp. 388-392). Looking at these, one begins to wonder about the suppressive areas of Baining culture, a topic which does not come up much in any of the other studies either; but from these one gets the impression that the aim is to "get feelings out," not to suppress them. In turn here, I wonder about historical determinants--as I did with all of the essays generally. The Baining play second string to the Tolai. Do they also hold down their feelings more? If so, this might explain Fajans's view (curiously

paralleling that of Mead, which Gerber negates for Samoa) that "the Baining have very little interest in and curiosity about the behavior of others" (p. 387). One way of keeping their identity might be not to say much. Talking about others is also "trouble," as Schieffelin points out for the Kaluli.

It is customary with these volumes to have a distinguished forerunner write an epilogue. This ritual function is met here by Alan Howard. Elders selected for such a task are allowed to ramble, talk about themselves, and provide historical depth by discussing earlier disputes. Howard gives us Malinowski and Freud (plus Spiro) and Mead versus Freeman again, and comments that none of these have given us the peoples' own views about themselves. He notes the bias in psychiatric models of deficiency in other cultures, which he combated in his study of coping among Hawaiian-Americans. Robert Levy's well-known work on Tahitians is also in this vein. On the concept of the person, he reinforces the conclusion that emerges from all these papers that "the unit of study is persons in relationships rather than persons as discrete entities" (p. 414). Finally, he says that we are only just beginning in this field. Theory and comparison have yet to be crafted. Indeed he describes the essays as "but first shaky steps" (p. 419). Here, I think, the elder is being too severe. The papers already reveal a sophistication that is far beyond the earlier efforts of the culture and personality school. However, I think it is certainly true that explorative studies of this kind should ideally be followed by a phase of hypothesis-making and testing, using such variables as gender, social structure, and history to arrive at generalizations and correlations for further reflection.

Finally a small complaint. Why does no one in the volume refer to Bill Epstein's work on shame in Melanesia? The fact that his work is influenced by Freudian and Jungian psychology should not have deterred the contributors; indeed it would give them a "handle" in terms of contrasting their "ethno-approach" with his. Epstein is certainly in a sense "ancestral" to this type of work and a place should have been reserved for him in it, at least in the essays that specifically focus on the concept of shame. I hope the contributors will not feel that I have said this in order to "shame" them. My query arises from genuine puzzlement about what seems to be an obvious oversight. Perhaps I am also defending my own ancestors here.