

Do Anutans Empathize?

Morality, Compassion, and Opacity of Other Minds

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Introduction

My interest in empathy as a topic for ethnographic investigation flows from a career-long involvement with Anuta, a Polynesian community in the Solomon Islands. During my initial fieldwork close to forty years ago, I was struck by the importance Anutans attach to *aropa*, the local version of a pan-Polynesian term. Anutans explained much of their behavior in terms of *aropa*. They spoke of it in church and on occasions of ceremonial exchange. It lies at the heart of their notions of kinship, and it has occupied a prominent position in many of my ethnographic publications.¹

Familiar variants of *aropa* include *aloha* (Hawaiian), *aroha* (Maori), *alofa* (Samoan), and *ʻofa* (Tongan). There is no precise English equivalent, but I and others have provided such glosses as “love,” “sympathy,” “pity,” “compassion,” or “empathy.”² Importantly, however, Anutans, like many other Polynesians, put relatively little stock in verbal proclamations of *aropa*; to be taken seriously, it must be actively demonstrated. Among Anutans, such action typically takes the form of economic assistance or sharing of economic resources, including houses, canoes, garden land, and—perhaps most importantly—food (cf. von Poser; Lohmann, both this volume).

Aropa is among Anuta’s most cherished and pervasive values. Anutans define kin as those who demonstrate *aropa* in their interactions. All Anutans consider themselves kin to one another, and they identify their community as a place where *aropa* is put into practice.³ They often describe non-Anutans as deficient in this key respect and express admiration for members of their own community based on the degree to which their actions communicate *aropa*.

Anutans go out of their way to act as if they have positive emotions, and in face-to-face interactions they try to hide such negative ones as suspicion and hostility—at least in part to avoid potentially disruptive or even violent conflicts. However, they readily express such feelings when speaking in pri-

vate with a third party. But while Anutans demand that members of their own community express *aropa* for one another, they have no comparable expectations of non-Anutans, whom they often stereotype as stingy, violent, or prone to drunkenness and irresponsibility. In contrast with their treatment of other community members, Anutans feel no moral scruples about treatment of non-kin, and it is acceptable to take advantage of such persons should the opportunity arise.⁴

Here, I explore Anutans' understandings of *aropa* in juxtaposition to such related concepts as imagination, projection, shame, guilt, and suffering. Anutans designate some of these with monolexemic linguistic labels (e.g., *pakamaa*, "shame"; *maninia*, "lust"; *makau*, "jealousy"; *mamai*, "pain"); others they do not. Anutans normally do not make the facile distinction drawn by English speakers between emotion (or feeling) and thinking, nor is the distinction between the mental and physical clear-cut. I will suggest that this is associated with the Anutan conviction that the everyday world is populated by spirits, and with their refusal to draw rigid boundaries between the spiritual and physical.

My contribution shares with most other chapters in this collection a concern with the impenetrability of other people's thoughts and feelings—the "opacity of other minds" (Robbins and Rumsey 2008b: 408 and *passim*). Empathy, as commonly understood, involves the ability to assess another's mental state and, in some sense, share in his or her experiences. Yet many Pacific islanders insist that one cannot directly access someone else's private thoughts or feelings.⁵ Under those circumstances, it might seem impossible to imagine oneself in someone else's position, i.e., to empathize. This suggests such fundamental questions as whether anthropologists can ever hope to understand "the native's point of view" (Geertz 1977; Outhwaite 1976; Lepowsky and Lohmann, both this volume) or ascertain the workings of their interlocutors' psyches (e.g., Lohmann; Mageo; Hermann, all this volume). My concern is neither with Anutan psychodynamics nor the question of how anthropologists can access others' thoughts and feelings. Rather, I attempt to explicate Anutans' theory of empathic phenomena as revealed in their language and discourse (cf. White and Kirkpatrick 1985).

Empathy and Related Constructs

Empathy requires the ability to imagine oneself—as it is often expressed—in someone else's place. I am not aware of an Anutan word that translates easily as "imagination." However, Anutans do have a variety of terms that cover aspects of what English speakers mean by that expression. Perhaps the closest to a general equivalent is *pakatautau*, which means something like "as if," "to

resemble,” “think of it in the following manner,” or, simply, “thus.” For example, in explaining what a word means, one might say “*pakatautau*” to suggest an analogy. I have recorded a historical narrative in which a man named Pu Teraupanga had signed on to work aboard a ship. The ship stopped at Rotuma, where Pu Teraupanga had a brief love affair. His lover and her family urged him to jump ship and promised to hide him, but Pu Teraupanga was convinced that he could not escape. The narrator says: “Pu Teraupanga e *muna pakatautau*, ko ia kairo reku. Paia ko te korii a te paparangi e aru ee rei mo ia. Te mea e reku, takiri ee rea e te korii.” A rough translation is: “Pu Teraupanga, *speaking hypothetically*, said he would not disappear. Because of the White Man’s dog who always accompanies him. When someone vanishes, the dog always finds him.”

In another tale, a man named Pu Notau Taapikitua was asked about an attack on a European ship. One of the attackers was said to have had tattoos similar to Pu Notau’s on his arms and legs, and Pu Notau observed, “A ko te tangata rea, muna ki ei e *pakatautau mai* ki ona nima mo ona vae nei, toku taina, Pu Kirekirei,” or in English: “The man described as having arms and legs *like mine* is my brother, Pu Kirekirei.”⁶ In each case, *pakatautau* is used to suggest that the speaker is drawing parallels or comparisons, or imagining himself in a different situation. This may not precisely coincide with “empathy,” since it does not entail imagining oneself in the position of another subject. However, it does involve imagining oneself in a position different from that which one currently occupies. The gap between such ruminations and true empathy is, arguably, small.

A more general term that includes imagination is *maanatu*, a word that means “to think.” It can refer to analytic thought or having an opinion. It also may be used for speculation or projection, although “to guess” is usually *matea*. Lastly, *atamai* is normally a noun referring to one’s “mind.” However, it applies to affect as well as cognition.

Anutans do not typically speak in terms that are readily translated as “projection,” although it is arguably a form of imagination and could be covered by *maanatu* or *pakatautau*. “Shame,” by contrast, is a common topic of conversation. The Anutan word for shame is *pakamaa*, a term shared by many Polynesian languages. A shy person asked to perform in public might decline with the explanation “*Kau pakamaa*,” “I am *pakamaa*.” And, should one be accused of inappropriate behavior, a common reaction is *pakamaa*. Such behavior might include theft, failure to care for a sick or elderly relative, or failure to respect a chief, the church, or senior kin. *Pakamaa* can be a powerful emotion, leading to dramatic actions up to and including suicide. In 1980, two youths were accused of stealing watermelons. They proclaimed their innocence, but suspicions remained; the young men felt such pangs of *pakamaa* that they eventually sailed off in a canoe, voyaging to Vanikoro, over 200 miles distant.

When, at length, a ship arrived, one of the youths returned home to Anuta. The other still felt *pakamaa* so strongly that he reboarded his vessel and sailed on to Santa Ana, about 300 miles farther to the west.⁷

Should one distinguish guilt from shame, *pakamaa* fits squarely in the latter category. The suspected watermelon thieves insistently declared their innocence. It was not pangs of conscience that drove them to their act of desperation, but rather the malignant gossip.⁸ Yet even embarrassment or shame requires an ability to place oneself, metaphorically, in someone else's skin: it is a response to what one thinks another thinks of him or her.

Other Anutan words that bear emotional content include *maninia*, *makau*, *mamai*, *mataku*, *konokono*, and *vakivaki*. *Maninia* is sharply differentiated from *aropa* in much the way that English speakers distinguish lust from love. It implies a powerful desire for something one does not have and, perhaps, ought not to have. Most commonly it involves either sexual longing that is not reciprocated or attraction to a married man or woman. In the latter case, *maninia* may lead one to resent the spouse, an emotion that Anutans call *makau*, perhaps best glossed as "jealousy" or "envy." In one important tale, a chief named Tearakura "lusted" (*ne maninia*) after his sister-in-law. Motivated by sexual jealousy (*pakamakau*), Tearakura used his chiefly mana to cause his brother, Tauvakatai, to suffer a battle wound from which he eventually died. After Tauvakatai's death, Tearakura married his deceased brother's widow.

Mamai means "pain" or "hurt." Usually this refers to physical pain. However, Anutans also recognize emotional suffering. They may cry (*tangi*) in response to emotional trauma, such as the death of a loved one or the experience of being spurned by a lover. They compose poems and songs about such experiences, and they engage in ritual wailing when a relative dies or leaves the island—or upon suffering the almost equally traumatic experience of seeing one of their canoes destroyed.⁹ *Pakarongo* most often means "to listen" or "to hear," but it can also refer to sensory or emotional awareness of various kinds. When a navigator feels the movement of the waves on his canoe, Anutans say *e pakarongo*, "he perceives" that movement. And Anutans understand that emotional reactions may have somatic consequences. One popular song (which Anutans borrowed from Tikopia, the neighboring island) depicts a man crying because of his feelings for a young woman living in another district: *Nau taka i te tonga, e kau tangisia*. "Young lady in the east, I cry for you." Two lines later, the singer avers, *Fiavare oku tino ki o nau taka*. "My body goes crazy because of you, young woman." In contrast with Western popular discourse—but in common with contemporary neuroscience—Anutans refuse to draw a rigid line between the mind and body.

Also, in contrast with the West, where thought and feeling are situated in the head—or, more precisely, in the brain—Anutans center thought and emotion in the belly (*te manava*), an association that makes good sense in terms

of the connection between food, life (which requires ingestion of food), and sharing—particularly of food—as the centerpiece of *aropa*.¹⁰ I became aware of the association between thought and the stomach in 1972, when I asked my friend Pu Ngarumea a question about kin relations and, while answering, he patted his abdomen, much in the way that Europeans might scratch their heads. I asked about his behavior, and he confirmed that his mannerism was associated with the thought process. Upon further inquiry, I was told that thoughts originate in the stomach or abdomen and are transmitted to the head, where they are further processed and converted into language before being communicated in speech.¹¹ The terms *mataku*, *konokono*, and *vakivaki* are used in more or less the same way as “fear,” “anger,” and “happiness” in English. *Mataku* describes a person’s reaction to danger and anticipation of unpleasant physical or social consequences. It is accompanied by an overwhelming urge to flee; if flight is impossible, a common reaction—particularly among children—is to cry. *Konokono* involves aggressive feelings—the feeling that one has been wronged and the wish to cause the guilty party injury. *Vakivaki* is a positive feeling that one experiences when events work out well. It is intimately associated with smiling and laughter, both of which Anutans call by the same term, *kata* (Feinberg 1989).¹²

Opacity of Other Minds

Halpern (2001) defines empathy as “a first person-like, experiential understanding of another person’s perspective” (see also Hollan; Lohmann; Throop, all this volume). In light of such definitions, one might question whether Anutans (or, more generally, Pacific islanders) empathize at all. Is “empathy” an appropriate gloss for *aropa*? The problem revolves around uncertainty about another person’s mental state.

At first glance, *aropa* appears consistent with Halpern’s definition: it is supposed to indicate positive feelings and is expressed through acts of generosity. A morally virtuous person sees another in need of assistance and provides it. However, Anutans also assert the opacity of other minds, and if one is unsure of someone else’s thoughts or feelings, it would seem impossible to have a first person-like understanding of the other’s experience.

Anutans affirm the opacity of other minds in myriad statements. One illustration comes from a story told by my close friend, Pu Tokerau, about his voyage to Tikopia during the 1960s. A canoe was headed for Patutaka, an uninhabited island 30 miles away that Anutans occasionally visit to hunt birds. While the sailors were at sea a storm arose, preventing the canoe from either progressing to Patutaka or returning home. Given the wind direction, the closest viable landfall was at Tikopia, 75 miles to the west. After many harrowing

hours, the Anutans reached their destination. I asked Pu Toke if he had been frightened during his ordeal, and he replied that he had not, since he was confident of his seafaring skills. Some years later, I related this exchange to Pu Toke's brother, the senior chief, who was also on the voyage. The chief replied that perhaps Pu Toke was unafraid; after all, one can never know what is in someone else's mind. However, he could say with certainty that his brother "was crying, just like everyone else, about how we were all going to perish at sea."

In this instance, the opacity of other minds was invoked to give the benefit of the doubt to someone who had made a questionable assertion. More often, it is used to impugn others' honesty or good intentions. For example, if one were to say, *Kau aropa ki a te koe*—roughly, "I love you"—but declined to provide the other with material assistance in times of need, the common Anutan conclusion would be that the speaker has uttered empty verbiage. In Anutan, one would say *e ngutu roi*, "he's lying"; in Pijin, one would use *bulsit*, a variant of the familiar English expression "bullshit."

Observations such as these have led some commentators to conclude that Pacific islanders view one another's thoughts as utterly impenetrable. At least for the Anutan case, I suggest a very different interpretation: their views are similar to those of Westerners; we are just more hypocritical.

In fact, Anutans show intense concern about each other's "real" intentions. In apparent contrast with New Guinea groups like the Bosavi (Scheffelin 2008), Urapmin (Robbins 2008), and Korowai (Stasch 2008), where gossip and even semi-private speculation about another's mental state are considered morally offensive, Anutans put enormous energy into trying to determine whether others are telling the truth. They view theft (*kaia*) and lying (*ngutu roi*) as moral defects. They recognize, however, that one cannot be absolutely certain of others' thoughts or of whether they are telling the truth. So, instead, they weigh the evidence and make their best estimate. The procedure is more reminiscent of an American courtroom than a philosopher's study. Anutans recognize that they may be mistaken, but they look for the preponderance of evidence, and when they accuse others of deception, theft, embezzlement, or fraud, they freely cite the evidence on which they have based their assessments. An American adage declares that actions speak louder than words. Anutans agree and base their understandings on that premise.

The extent to which one can know what someone else is thinking, and whether overt representations are truthful, is problematic anywhere. Rather than invest a great deal of time in trying to determine other people's mental states, Anutans tend to judge each other by their actions. If speech and actions correspond, Anutans are willing to take one another at their word, at least provisionally, and describe their verbal proclamations as "truthful" (*ngutu mooni*). If a person's deeds appear to contradict his or her words, Anutans

conclude that the person is “lying” (*ngutu roi*).¹³ In short, Anutans frequently formulate hypotheses about what others are thinking and feeling. Cooperation is critically important to them, and they try to interpret the intentions behind others’ speech acts. Their view of other minds’ accessibility is fundamentally similar to that of Europeans or Americans. They recognize that one’s ability to read another’s thoughts is limited, but that limitation does not preempt their ability to empathize any more than it does ours.

Anutans display empathy in a variety of contexts. They often use the metaphor of a seabird (*te manu o te moana*) to represent an ocean traveler. At the end of a long voyage, one is likely to be frightened, cold, and hungry, far from home, friends, kin, and emotional support. It is easy for Anutans to imagine how one would feel under such conditions.¹⁴ They often sail long distances in small canoes and risk being lost at sea—as some occasionally are.¹⁵ They experience cold, rain, wind, and rough seas. And they not infrequently risk their own comfort and safety to assist others in distress.

One recent well-known case in which Anutans took such a risk occurred around 1990. A man named Sione escaped from a Tongan prison in a motorboat. After several hours on the ocean, he ran out of fuel and drifted to Anuta. The Anutans showed their *aropa* by offering him a home and caring for him. Eventually word of Sione’s whereabouts filtered to the Tongan authorities, who demanded that he be returned to their custody. The Anutan chiefs, however, stood firm against the combined pressure of the Tongan and Solomon Islands governments and police forces, refusing to release their guest. In their view, he had suffered enough and had come to them seeking protection, which it was their duty to provide. In the end, Anutans were spared retribution from the power of two national governments, but they could not have known in advance what reprisals their action might elicit.¹⁶ It would be difficult to account for such risk-taking, were Anutans incapable of empathy.

Empathy and Social Structure

Mageo (this volume) and Gershon (2007) suggest that empathy takes different forms depending on the social structure of the community in which it is found. For Anuta, *aropa* is at the heart of social structure and the kinship system. It is the centerpiece of moral behavior, and it takes on an asymmetrical, complementary character, reflecting the island’s ritual, political, and social hierarchy.

As I have argued elsewhere (see particularly Feinberg 1981a, 1981b, 2004), Anutans define kin relations in terms of an intersection of genealogical and behavioral components. Kin normally have a genealogical connection but are expected to identify with and support one another. In other words, they

should feel *aropa* and act upon those feelings by sharing gardens, canoes, food, and other resources. Members of the same domestic unit (*te patongia*) are joint owners of such resources, and they share a food basket at island-wide distributions. But if close genealogical relatives should have a falling out and fail to express *aropa* through mutual support, they may cease to be considered close kin. Conversely, people who have no genealogical connection but express *aropa* by sharing economic resources may find themselves incorporated into the kinship system as thoroughly as one who was born into the community. Many instances of such incorporation may be seen in the community's historical narratives, and I also know of several current cases.

Anuta has a classic Polynesian ranking system, based on genealogical seniority and mana. The senior chief is the most senior male patrilineal descendant of Tearakura, the chief whose desire for his sister-in-law I discussed above. The junior chief is the senior male patrilineal descendant of Tearakura's younger brother, Pu Tepuko. Others are ranked in approximate proportion to their nearness to or distance from the senior line. Those with greatest genealogical seniority are believed, other things being equal, to possess the greatest *manuu* or "mana," "spiritual power" (Feinberg 1996b). Men of the chiefly *kainanga*, "clans," are known as *maru*, "protectors," and are expected to use their *manuu* to ensure the welfare and prosperity of those below them. Members of the two non-chiefly clans are known as *pakaaropa* "sympathy-producing" or "pitiable"; Anutans expect them to honor and obey the chiefs and *maru*. The actors in both cases are expressing *aropa*. *Maru* demonstrate compassion by caring for those who lack the *manuu* to ensure their own welfare; *pakaaropa* express appreciation (also termed *aropa*) for those above them by ceding respect and obedience.

Anutans associate moral virtue with *aropa*. Only by expressing *aropa* toward others may one come to be thought of as a "good person" (*tangata rerei*, "good man," or *papine rerei*, "good woman"). To live comfortably on the island, however, it may also be important to evoke the empathy of others. This is accomplished most often through reciprocal interaction. If one is generous toward others, one hopes they will be generous in return.¹⁷ By emphasizing kin ties or common membership in a property-owning extended family domestic unit (*patongia*), one can usually count on economic and emotional support. By showing respect (*pakamamapa*) for others, particularly for Anutans of high rank, one also increases the likelihood of being treated with generosity. In addition, people sometimes exaggerate their degree of need, hoping to elicit support from those in positions of power—chiefs, spirits of deceased ancestors, pre-Christian deities, or the Christian God (cf. Firth 1970; Hermann, this volume). To portray oneself as pitiable in hopes of reaping material rewards, however, carries some risk. If such claims are too obviously exaggerated, or if

they create the impression that the supplicant is incompetent or lazy, feelings of compassion may morph into contempt.

While *aropa* is positively valued and acting generously improves one's social standing, the ability to express *aropa* through economic largesse also serves to support a hierarchical social system. Chiefs are thought to have a special relationship with divinity and, because of that relationship, to possess extraordinary spiritual power. Chiefs use their power to ensure the community's prosperity and, in that way, express *aropa*. While a chief does this out of a sense of noblesse oblige, he also creates among his constituents a sense of dependency, and he issues an implied threat that if they fail to obey or respect him, they may suffer some material misfortune.¹⁸

While it is important to express *aropa* in one's social relationships, it is also important to maintain a sense of balance. It is "good" (*rerei*) to empathize with and materially support one's fellow islanders and kin, but massive acts of generosity that go beyond what is required and beyond the recipient's ability to reciprocate lead to shame, embarrassment (*pakamaa*; see above), and perhaps resentment.¹⁹

Empathy and Non-humans

Normally, Anutans speak of *aropa* in relation to other human beings, particularly to other Anutans or to non-Anutans with whom they hope to establish a mutually beneficial social and economic relationship. On occasion, however, I have also heard Anutans express such feelings for animals including piglets, cats, or dogs for which they are caring and with which they have established an emotional bond.²⁰ I have not heard Anutans use the expression in discussing the sea, the earth, coral reefs, or other natural features despite their concerns about environmental protection and understanding that their own well-being depends on the health of their surroundings. Anutans derive pleasure from their surroundings, speaking fondly of their clear salt water and extensive reefs, the island's white sand beach, and its productive soil. However, they do not attribute human characteristics to their physical environment. English speakers may describe the sea as alternately "calm" or violently "angry." Anutans also refer to a "calm" sea, but they use a different word when speaking of human emotions. In telling a person to "calm down," they say "*maarie*." A "calm sea," by contrast, is *marino*, and the absence of wind is *ngaaiio*. I can adduce explicit statements on Anutans' ability to empathize with animals, but not with rocks, soil, sky, or ocean. One possible explanation is that animals are able to reciprocate expressions of affection, whereas the feedback gained from geographical, geological, or astronomic features seems mechanical and, in a way, abstract.

In addition to establishing an empathetic relationship with animals, Anutans traditionally attempted to create such relationships with spiritual beings. Occasionally, they might imagine themselves in the position of a spirit and attempt, on that basis, to predict how spirits are likely to react to various stimuli. Most often, however, their concern was to persuade spirits to empathize (and sympathize) with them. They would do so by performing worship ceremonies, offering food and drink, and speaking to the spirits in ways that emphasized, or even exaggerated, their own pitiable state. The hope was that the gods or spirits would use their superhuman power to assist the worshippers by ensuring health, prosperity, and safety from foreign invasion. Firth (1970) makes similar observations about Tikopian religious practice and notes with more than a touch of irony that Tikopians regarded their traditional deities as extraordinarily powerful, but also rather gullible and susceptible to human deception.

As is true of comparable ideas among Banabans (Hermann, this volume), *aropa's* prominence in the Anutan value system appears to have evolved historically. The pan-Polynesian distribution of cognate terms, along with information gleaned from Anutan oral traditions, suggests that this has been an important cultural construct for centuries. At the same time, oral traditions depicting sometimes brutal warfare, the admiration that Anutans hold for powerful warriors, and the often self-centered or antisocial behavior of great culture heroes suggests historical complexity. This is perhaps best illustrated by the most important of Anuta's culture heroes, the already-mentioned chief Tearakura.

Tearakura lived approximately ten generations ago and shaped Anuta's current social system. Regarded as the most powerful chief ever to have dwelt on the island, he became the community's premier deity after his death. As the island's most important god, Tearakura cared for his descendants. A senior chief is his direct patrilineal descendant, and for that reason Tearakura is expected to have special rapport with his successors. Because of that rapport, he endows the senior chief with mana and is thus either directly or indirectly responsible for the island's welfare. Yet while Tearakura, in some sense, is a paragon of empathy and virtue, many of the acts attributed to him during his life as a human being are morally most dubious.

Such acts include his reshaping of the island's social order by joining with his two brothers and one brother-in-law to annihilate the remainder of the male population. Those men became the founders of Anuta's four *kainanga*, "clans." Then, having secured the island for himself and his siblings, Tearakura became infatuated with his youngest brother's wife and used his mana to bring about his brother's death (see above). Later he caused his daughter to take her own life and, in a fit of remorse, committed suicide himself. Anutans are ambivalent about Tearakura's moral character. Some commentators cite extenuat-

ing circumstances that might justify his apparently antisocial behavior, and it could be argued that his suicide resulted from a belated sense of empathic identification with his unfortunate daughter. In any case, his followers' ambivalence did not compromise the deference and respect with which he was treated before the church's establishment in 1916. And Anutans may well have perceived him to be more empathetic as a spirit than he had been as a man.

Humans, Spirits, and the Moral Order

In Anutan oral traditions, empathy is often overshadowed by emotions of fear (*mataku*) and accompanying violence. Their tales repeatedly depict visits from elsewhere in Polynesia. The visitors most often are assumed to have been hostile and were met with deadly force. Since Christianity's establishment, the period of violent clashes is termed an age of "darkness" (*te penua ne nopo poouri*). The church's doctrinal emphasis on "love" gave *aropa* the upper hand in comparison with other values such as strength, martial skill, and physical courage. Thus, *aropa* assumed the pre-eminent position that it holds today. Still, empathy is specially reserved for kin, and outsiders are kept at arm's length until they are incorporated into the kinship system. Thereafter, *aropa* becomes the order of the day.

At the outset of this contribution, I suggested that Anutans often blur the boundary that separates feeling from thinking, the line between the physical and mental. The most common word for "feeling" is *pakarongo*, which usually means "to listen" or "to hear." Feelings, very much like thoughts, originate in the stomach or abdomen. Thoughts and emotions often produce associated physical states, while physical experiences lead to certain thoughts and feelings. "Pain" (*mamai*) or "happiness" (*vakivaki*) have both emotional and physical components, and the same is true of "empathy" (*aropa*).

I also suggested that the blurring of such boundaries is associated with the Anutan conviction that the everyday world is populated by spirits, and with Anutans' refusal to draw a rigid distinction between the spiritual and physical. Elsewhere (Feinberg 1996c), I have argued that Anutans are consummate relativists. An action may be "good" (*rerei*) in some contexts and "bad" (*kovi*) in others. An object may be "big" (*rai*) or "small" (*tii*), "in front" (*i mua*) or "in back" (*i muri*), "black" (*uri*) or "white" (*tea*), or "sweet" (*makara*) or "bitter" (*kona*) depending on the context and on what is being compared. A titleholder is described as "chief" (*ariki*) in relation to a person of low rank (*pakaaropa*), but low-ranking men are still *ariki* to their children; meanwhile an *ariki* may be *pakaaropa*—"pitiable" or "commoner"—in relation to important spiritual beings. Similarly, there is no firm dividing line to separate humans from spirits. When human beings die, they become *atua*, "spirits," while the most im-

portant gods and spirits are the ghosts of deceased ancestors.²¹ My argument is that the Anutans' refusal to draw a firm distinction between the material and immaterial, the mental (or spiritual) and the physical, the natural and supernatural, is perfectly in keeping with their insistence that "empathy" (*aropa*) exists on both an economic and affective plane.

Conclusion

As in other communities discussed in this collection, Anuta has no single word that may be unambiguously translated as "empathy." However, one expression—*aropa*—overlaps with it in several critical respects. Other possible glosses for *aropa* include "love," "compassion," "sympathy," and "pity." It is Anuta's version of a term distributed throughout Polynesia, and similar constructs, often marked by different terms, may be identified in other parts of Oceania. On Anuta, it constitutes a kind of "core" or "master" symbol (cf. Schneider 1968) in terms of which the island's social, ritual, political, and economic systems must be understood.

The English glosses for *aropa* should be treated with caution, as they typically suggest internal emotional states. For Anutans, *aropa* is expressed in overt—usually economic—behavior. Yet "empathy" as commonly understood implies "imagining the perspective of another from a *quasi*-first person perspective" (Throop, this volume; see also Halpern 2001; Rosen 1995; Wikan 1992). As Mageo (this volume) observes: "Cognitively it refers to the ability to see as others see: to simulate their viewpoint. Affectively empathy is to feel as if one was the other: that is, to simulate oneness." Moreover, it involves not only projection of one's feelings onto another but *accurate* assessment of the other's thoughts and feelings (Hollan, this volume). Thus, were mental states regarded as entirely internal and inaccessible to others, to speak of *aropa* as "empathy" would be problematic.

Like many other islanders, Anutans say that one cannot be certain of what others think and feel. But if the mental states of others are inscrutable, empathy, it seems, should be impossible. Mageo (this volume) resolves the problem for Samoa by denying that *alofa* is a matter of imagination and emphasizing its material expression in the form of giving food or service. Likewise, Anutans are primarily concerned with one another's actions rather than their inner states. Still, *aropa* involves an inner state as well as outward action, and Anutans are concerned with feelings and intentions as predictors of future behavior.

I suggest in this respect that the Anutan view is very much in keeping with Western ideas dating back at least to Adam Smith, for whom empathy is a consummately social process involving imaginative projection.²² Smith (2002 [1759]: 1) observed:

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 by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations.

I concur with Hollan (this volume) that empathy is not a matter of “mind reading.” Rather, it is an educated guess based on empirical evidence. If one guesses right, the other person issues signals that confirm the accuracy of the initial hypothesis. Thus, it is a two-way process, anchoring the social system and marking the cornerstone of moral sentiments and actions.

Notes

1. See, e.g., Feinberg (1981a, 1981b, 1996a, 1996b, 2002a, 2002b, 2004).
2. Mageo (this volume) systematically discusses the Samoan variant, *alofa*. Related concepts, often called by different terms, are found in many non-Polynesian Pacific communities. Examples considered in this volume include *runguy* on Yap (Throop) and *nanoanga* on Banaba (Hermann).
3. Throop and Hermann (both this volume) make comparable points regarding Yap and Banaba, respectively.
4. I encountered this most dramatically in an incident involving a Taiwanese fishing boat that visited Anuta for several days in 1973 (see Feinberg 2006).
5. Perhaps the most focused treatment of this topic is in a special section of *Anthropological Quarterly*, edited by Joel Robbins and Alan Rumsey (Robbins and Rumsey 2008a).
6. For more detail on these episodes, see Feinberg (1998).
7. See Feinberg (1991) for a full description of this event.
8. Since the protagonists insisted on their innocence, the best English gloss for their emotion might seem to be on the order of “justifiable anger” (Lutz 1988) rather than “shame.” However, the Anutans’ word for anger (*konokono*) does not specify whether or not the anger is justifiable. *Pakamaa* is cognate with terms found throughout Polynesia that are typically glossed as “shame” or “embarrassment,” and those translations seem equally applicable in the Anutan case.
9. In contrast with Yapese, who strive to avoid revealing their true feelings (Throop, this volume), Anutans readily express their emotions by smiling, laughing, or crying in socially appropriate contexts. They might be criticized for not acting on such implied emotions, e.g., for not helping a kinsperson in need. Anutans are not criticized, however, for expressing their feelings too openly. If anything, they might be censured for appearing stoic under emotionally loaded conditions. One who acts on feelings of stinginess or other antisocial sentiments is, not surprisingly, subject to criticism, but such disapproval is based on the specific content of the feelings, not the fact that they are openly expressed. Anutans typically do avoid confronting one another directly with suspicions of dishonesty, but their motivation is practical rather than moral, as they recognize that accusations of theft or lying may arouse anger and intensify the extant social discord.

10. In many ways, Anutans' propensity to equate food with empathy parallels that described for Papua New Guinea's Bosmun (von Poser, this volume).
11. The contrast between Europeans and Anutans, of course, is not absolute, as Westerners associate "the heart" with emotion. "Heart" in Anutan is *te patumanava* 'belly stone'.
12. Despite the apparent similarity of feelings depicted by these terms and their approximate English equivalents, some differences exist in the conditions that evoke them and the way in which they are expressed. Elsewhere (Feinberg 1989), I describe the Anutans' association of smiling and laughter with happiness, including the beliefs that laughter is contagious and that one cannot laugh without becoming happy. This somewhat mechanistic view of the relationship between physical and emotional states, in turn, explains a tendency to laugh at people who suffer minor pain or misfortune—a practice Westerners are likely to condemn as bad manners if not downright insensitive and worthy of moral opprobrium.
13. In fact, "lying" is not quite accurate as a gloss for *ngutu roi*, since the English expression implies that one has uttered an intentional falsehood. A better translation is "to make a misstatement," as an unintentional falsehood may also be described as *ngutu roi*. It is worth noting that the same melding of concepts occurs in Pijin, where *laia*, "liar," may apply to utterance of unintended falsehoods as well as purposeful deception.
14. Banabans display a similar theme in their expressions of "pity" for visitors to their island (Hermann, this volume).
15. As recently as 2006, three men disappeared at sea while fishing in stormy weather. This was a major theme in a recent television documentary (BBC 2007). An inventory of Anutan voyages lost at sea through the mid 1980s appears in Feinberg (1988). For Anutans, voyaging is typically—but not exclusively—a male endeavor. The crew on an inter-island voyage often includes one woman who cooks and tends the fire. Although women rarely paddle, steer, or handle the sail, they have enough experience at sea to understand and express empathy (*aropa*) for others who suffer the danger and discomfort of a lengthy inter-island voyage.
16. Sione, sad to say, was not his country's most distinguished emissary. According to reports that I was given in 2000, he never tried to fit into Anutan society. He refused to attend the local church or contribute economically. After a series of his alleged anti-social actions, the Anutans felt compelled to tie him up inside a house under constant guard. Eventually he managed to escape, stole a canoe, and sailed to Tikopia, where he was once more given sanctuary. In September 2007 I met Sione while on my way to Anuta aboard the ship *MV Baruku*. As of our meeting, his fortunes seemed to be improving; he had married a Tikopian woman and appeared to have become a productive member of his new adopted home. By mid 2008, however, he had worn out his welcome on Tikopia. The chiefs had handed him over to the Royal Solomon Islands Police, and he was returned to Tonga to serve out his prison sentence.
17. Notions of empathy as reciprocal kindness are associated with versions of the so-called golden rule, embodied in most of the world's great religious traditions (see, e.g., Armstrong 2006: esp. chap. 6).
18. This is discussed in Feinberg (1978, 1979, 1980, 1996b, 2002a). It is also addressed by several contributors to Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo 1996.
19. When I left Anuta in 1973, at the end of my first visit, I distributed leftover supplies to the community. At a certain point, Pu Penuakimoana, an important community

- leader, asked me to stop because the amount of food and equipment I had distributed was becoming something of an embarrassment.
20. In contrast with Hollan's (this volume) description of Toraja, and what I have seen myself in other Pacific island communities, I have not witnessed Anutans willfully mistreating animals. That is not to say that it is never done, but it appears to be less commonplace than in some other locales.
 21. In this respect, if Hawaiian views of the relationship between humans and spirits are anything like those on Anuta, the infamous debate between Marshall Sahlins (1981, 1995) and Gananath Obeyesekere (1992) over whether Captain Cook was regarded as a god or "simply" a powerful chief is a heated struggle over a non-issue.
 22. I am indebted to Ilana Gershon (2007) for calling my attention to Smith's relevance for discussions of imagination and its role in generating empathy.

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