

Empathy and Emotions

On the Notion of Empathy as Emotional Sharing

Errata

- p. 17, line 24 Change “he” to “she”
- p. 50, line 22 Insert “as” between “has” and “a”
- p. 50, line 25 Insert “as” between “has” and “a”
- p. 73, line 28 Change “asumptions” to “assumptions”
- p. 112, line 20 Insert “of” after “kind”
- p. 136, line 4 Change “(3)” to “(iii)”
- p. 139, line 33 Change “Davis 1996” to “Davis 1994”
- p. 140, line 3 Change “Davis 1996” to “Davis 1994”
- p. 154 Insert reference: Verducci, S. (2000) “A Conceptual History of Empathy and a Question it Raises for Moral Education”. In *Educational Theory* 50: pp. 63-80.
- p. 154 Insert reference: Wilson, M. D. (1996) “Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge”. In *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (1996). Pp. 89-141.

Umeå Studies in Philosophy 7

Empathy and Emotions

*On the Notion of Empathy as
Emotional Sharing*

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Umeå 2003

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ISSN 1650-1748

ISBN 91-7305-428-3

Printed in Sweden by Print & Media, Umeå University, 2003:303057

Distributor: Department of Philosophy and Linguistics, Umeå University,
SE-901 87 Umeå, Sweden.

ABSTRACT

The topic of this study is a notion of empathy that is common in philosophy and in the behavioral sciences. It is here referred to as ‘the notion of empathy as emotional sharing’, and it is characterized in terms of three ideas. If a person, S, has empathy with respect to an emotion of another person, O, then (i) S experiences an emotion that is similar to an emotion that O is currently having, (ii) S’s emotion is caused, in a particular way, by the state of O or by S’s entertaining an idea of the state or situation of O, and (iii) S experiences this emotion in a way that does not entail that S is in the corresponding emotional state. The aim of the study is to clarify this notion of empathy by clarifying these three ideas and by tracing the history of their development in philosophy.

The study consists of two parts. Part one contains a short and selective account of the history in Western philosophy of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing. In chapter 2 Spinoza’s theory of imitation of affects and Hume’s theory of sympathy are presented. It is argued that these theories only exemplify the second idea characteristic of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing. Chapter 3 contains presentations of Adam Smith’s theory of sympathy, and Schopenhauer’s theory of compassion. These theories are shown to exemplify the second and the third idea. In chapter 4 there are presentations of Edith Stein’s description of *Einfühlung*, and Max Scheler’s account of empathy and fellow-feeling. It is shown that these accounts contain explicit specifications of the third idea, and it is argued that they also exemplify the second idea.

In part two, the three ideas are further clarified and the notion of empathy as emotional sharing is defined. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the main contemporary philosophical analyses of empathy. Three different views are distinguished: one that construes empathetic emotions as emotional states, one that construes them as imagined emotions, and one that construes them as off-line emotions. The first two views are criticized and rejected. The third is accepted and further developed in chapter 6, which contains a general analysis of the emotions. A distinction is made between two ways of experiencing an emotion, and it is argued that it is possible to have the affective experience characteristic of a particular kind of emotional state without being in that kind of state. In chapter 7, a definition of ‘empathy’ is proposed. This definition contains specifications of the three ideas characteristic of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing, and it shows both how the empathizer’s emotion resembles the emotion of the empathizee, and how this emotion is caused and experienced.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank for assisting me in the work on this thesis. First and foremost, I wish to thank my supervisor Ingvar Johansson. Ingvar has been a constant source of inspiration, criticism, and support. He has provided me with innumerable comments and suggestions, and I have always felt that I could rely on him both for advice and for encouragement. I am deeply grateful for this.

I also wish to thank my assistant supervisor Mats Furberg, and my former assistant supervisor Ulla M. Holm. Mats and Ulla have been of great help and support, especially during the early and middle stages of this work. I am truly thankful for this, and I only wish that I could have followed their suggestions more often than I have.

Most parts of the thesis have been discussed at different seminars at the Department of Philosophy and Linguistics, Umeå University. I thank all the participants in these seminars for their efforts at improving my work. For special assistance and support, I wish to thank Gunnar Andersson, Anders Berglund, Sten Lindström, Jonas Nilsson, Bertil Strömberg, and Pär Sundström. I am also grateful to Marie Lundstedt for providing me with plenty of encouragement, and to Ulrika Sahlén for helping me with some practical matters and for cheering me on. Anders Berglund also deserves special thanks for formatting the manuscript and for helping me with the cover.

Of the people outside the department, I wish to thank Mats Johansson and Wlodek Rabinowicz for valuable comments and support, Patricia Sanderson Gill for pushing me on and cheering me up, and Katherine Munn for being most helpful in correcting my English. I also wish to express my gratitude for the constant support I have received from my parents, Anita and Håkan Nilsson, and from my brother, Thomas Nilsson.

The main financial support for this work has been received from The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation via the research project “Medvetande, Materialism och Möjlighet” (“Mind, Materialism, and Modality”). Additional support has been provided by J C Kempes Minnes Stipendiefond, and the Department of Philosophy and Linguistics, Umeå University.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim and Background

The topic of this study is a view of empathy that is common in philosophy and in the social and behavioral sciences. Simply put, this view characterizes empathy as a state in which a person shares the emotion of someone else in a particular way. The study aims to clarify this view of empathy and to develop a better understanding of its historical and philosophical roots.

In recent years the everyday use of the word ‘empathy’ has become more and more frequent. Nowadays you can actually hear people use such phrases as ‘I can empathize with her’, ‘I have empathy with him’ or ‘I felt empathy for her’. In most cases, what people seem to mean when they use phrases like these is that they are somehow aware of and concerned about the mental state or condition of another person. Calling a person ‘empathic’ or ‘empathetic’ seems to be the same as saying that this person is sensitive to and cares about the conditions of others. Thus, in ordinary language, ‘empathy’ and derivations thereof seem to be used in pretty much the same sense as ‘sympathy’ and derivations thereof.

However, this is most often not the sense in which the word ‘empathy’ is used in scientific contexts.¹ When scientists talk about empathy they tend to distinguish between empathy and sympathy. In general, sympathy is described as a state of awareness of and concern for the condition of another, whereas empathy is described as a state of awareness of, but not necessarily concern for, another person’s condition (Wispé 1987).² According to this usage, then, saying that someone has empathy with someone else, feels empathy for someone, or empathizes with someone, is not the same as saying that the first is somehow concerned about the condition of the second. What is meant is rather that the

¹ A detailed presentation of the contemporary psychological research on empathy can be found in Håkansson (2003).

² There are some exceptions to this rule. Among psychologists, see Batson, O’Quin, Fultz, Vanderplas, and Isen (1983). Among philosophers, see Sober and Wilson (1998).

first is aware of the condition of the second. On this view, empathy in itself could be described as a neutral awareness of the condition of another.

Although most scientists use ‘empathy’ to denote an awareness of the condition of other people, different scientists have different views on the specific nature of this awareness. Broadly, it is possible to distinguish between one view associated with social and developmental psychologists, and another view associated with persons involved in the study of psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and counseling. In the first group empathy is most often regarded as the state or ability to perceive and feel the emotions of others, whereas in the latter group empathy is more often viewed only as the state of perceiving, or the ability to perceive, the state or condition. Whereas most social and developmental psychologists would define ‘empathy’ as the state or ability both of perceiving and sharing the emotions of others, most therapists would define it only as the state or ability of perceiving and/or understanding the mental states of others. Admittedly, many of the latter would no doubt claim that sharing another person’s emotion can be an important part of the process of gaining an understanding of his state,³ but they would still not define ‘empathy’ in such a way that this emotional sharing is a necessary part of empathy.⁴

Since a person can very well perceive or be aware of an emotion in another without in any way sharing this emotion, when speaking about empathy, most social and developmental psychologists put more stress on the sharing-part than on the perceiving-part. It is the sharing of an emotion that is said to be distinctive and special about empathy, and it is this that has received the most attention in their research.

Most contemporary philosophers writing on empathy share the view of the social and developmental psychologists. Like the psychologists, most philosophers use the word ‘empathy’ to denote a state, not only of being aware of another person’s emotion, but also of sharing this emotion. And, again in

³ In the rest of this text ‘he’ will be used to refer to the person with whom another person has empathy. This person will also be referred to as ‘the empathee’ or the object (O) of empathy. The person who has empathy with another, the empathizer or the subject (S) of empathy, will be referred to as ‘she’. This convention is adopted only for the purpose of simplifying the exposition.

⁴ This difference between the views of social and developmental psychologists, on the one hand, and people involved in the study of different kinds of therapeutic activities, on the other, has been noted before. See, e.g., Bohart and Greenberg (1997, 24f.) and Hoffman (2000, 29). The difference is fairly obvious if one compares the papers collected in *Empathy Reconsidered: New Directions in Psychotherapy* (1997) with the views presented by Mark H. Davis in *Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach* (1994).

similarity to the psychologists, most of these philosophers emphasize that what is distinctive about empathy is the sharing of the other's emotion.

The aim of this study is to clarify this view of empathy. In order to begin this work, I have distinguished three ideas that, I will argue, are characteristic of it.

(1) The first idea is that of empathy as a state of emotional sharing. By this I mean the view that empathy with respect to another's emotion requires feeling or experiencing an emotion that is, in some sense, similar to an emotion that this person is currently experiencing. According to this idea, if a person, S, is to have empathy with another person, O, with respect to an emotion of the type E, then both S and O must, in some sense, feel or experience emotions of the type E.⁵

(2) The second idea is that if S feels or experiences an empathetic emotion, i.e., if S experiences an emotion as part of having empathy with someone, then S's emotion must be caused in a special way. There are two parts to this idea. The first part consists in the claim that S's emotion must be, in some way, dependent upon O's state or situation. If S is to feel an emotion as part of having empathy with O, then S's emotion must be caused by O's emotion or by S's entertaining some thought or idea either about the emotion of O or about the situation in which O finds himself. This claim expresses the view that the emotional sharing that takes place in empathy does not happen by coincidence. Whatever emotion you are feeling at a certain time, there certainly is some other person, somewhere on earth, who is feeling a similar emotion at the same time. That kind of emotional sharing, however, cannot be a constituent part of empathy.

The second part of the idea that empathetic emotions are caused in a special way is the claim that they are not caused in the same way as ordinary, non-empathetic emotions are. On the basis of a theory of emotions put forth by Robert M. Gordon (1987), I will argue that ordinary emotions and emotional

⁵ I want to point out here that as I use the term 'emotional sharing' two persons share an emotion as soon as they are experiencing emotions of the same qualitative kind, i.e., if you feel sad and if I feel sad at the same time as you, then we share an emotion. This way of using 'emotional sharing' is considerably different from the way in which Peter Goldie (2000) uses it. For him 'emotional sharing' denotes a state in which two (or more) people experience emotions that are not only of the same qualitative kind, but that are also (a) directed towards the same object or (b) directed towards the same type of object. An example of (a) is when the crowd at a soccer game responds with disappointment at a missed penalty; an example of (b) is when a number of persons, for some reason, start to long for their respective "folks back home" (Goldie 2000, 193). As I read these examples, emotional sharing, for Goldie, requires that a group of people is experiencing similar emotions *for the same reasons*. My use of the term requires only that the emotions are of the same qualitative kind.

states are in most cases caused by an actual or anticipated satisfaction or frustration of one or some of one's wishes. If, for example, a person is sad, in most cases she is sad because she believes that something is the case, and because this belief has frustrated one of her wishes. Now, judging from the ways in which most contemporary philosophers describe the emergence of the empathetic emotions, this is not the way in which these emotions are caused. Mostly, empathetic emotions are described as "vicarious emotions"; that is, as emotions that are felt in the place of another person or in response to another person's situation. Usually this is taken to mean that empathetic emotions are not experienced in response to a situation of one's own or to a situation that one takes oneself to be in. If, for instance, one feels empathetic sadness, then, although one feels this sadness because another person is feeling sadness or because one takes another person to be in an unfortunate situation, one does not feel it because one takes oneself to be in an unfortunate situation. Following one of Gordon's suggestions, I will argue that the best way of explaining this is by saying that if one feels empathetic sadness, then one does not feel this sadness because of a frustration of one or some of one's wishes.

(3) The third and final idea is that empathetic emotions are felt or experienced in a special way. This phenomenon has been described in different ways by different writers. One thing which these descriptions have in common, however, is that they all entail the claim that if you feel, e.g., empathetic sadness, then you experience this sadness in a way that does not involve being sad. If you have empathy with someone who is sad, then you do not feel sad in the same way as he does: you do not feel miserable, and you do not become overwhelmed with sadness. I will later give a more detailed characterization of this particular way of having or experiencing empathetic emotions, but for now I only wish to characterize it negatively: If you feel an emotion as part of empathy, then you feel this emotion in a way that does not entail that you are in the corresponding emotional state.

These three ideas are characteristic of what I will henceforth refer to as 'the notion of empathy as emotional sharing', or 'the notion of empathy' for short. Since these ideas are commonly found in the contemporary philosophical literature on empathy, I will sometimes also refer to this notion as 'the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing' or 'the current conception of empathy'. I wish to stress, however, that although one or more of these ideas can be found in most contemporary philosophical accounts of empathy, they cannot all be found in all accounts. Strictly speaking then, the current notion of empathy is not everybody's notion. Nevertheless, the notion captures such a

widespread view of empathy that I do not think that it is misleading to speak of it in these terms.

1.2 Structure and Content

The present work is divided into two parts. In Part 1, I provide a short and selective account of the history of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing within Western philosophy. I focus on the views of some of the philosophers who have contributed most to the emergence of this notion, and I try to show how their views are related both to each other and to the modern conception of empathy.

Although the main purpose of this historical presentation has been to further our understanding of the notion of empathy in itself, a secondary purpose has been to shed some light on a hitherto neglected side of the history of philosophy. As far as I know, there are no studies available that give a comprehensive account of the history of the notion of empathy in philosophy.⁶ There are, of course, studies of the views of different, particular philosophers, and there are also some comparative studies of the views of two or three writers. However, with a broader study that investigates the relations among several philosophers, I believe one can gain not only a clearer view of the development of the notion of empathy, but also a better understanding of the views of each particular philosopher. I have attempted to provide at least the beginnings of such an account in this part of the work.

Part 1 is structured into three chapters. In Chapter 2, I present Spinoza's notion of imitation of affects and Hume's notion of sympathy. Both of these notions are important precursors to the current conception of empathy, even though they do not encompass more than one of the ideas characteristic of that notion. What these notions denote are *processes in which a person acquires an emotion* (or, more generally, a mental state) through entertaining an idea of a similar emotion (or mental state) in someone else. These processes do not necessarily give rise to states of emotional sharing, nor do they give rise to emotions that are different from ordinary emotions in any interesting way. The processes themselves, however, are consistent with the ways in which an emotion felt as part of having empathy must be caused.

In Chapter 3, I present Adam Smith's concept of sympathy, and Schopenhauer's concept of compassion. These are concepts that denote *states of*

⁶ There are some accounts that touch upon the notion's history in philosophy. See Wispé (1987) and Verducci (2000).

having emotions (in the case of Schopenhauer, pain or suffering), that are caused in particular ways, and that are had, or at least can be had, in a way that differs from our ordinary ways of having emotions. Neither concept denotes a state of emotional sharing, but since they entail both the second and the third idea characteristic of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing, they nevertheless constitute significant steps towards this notion.

Chapter 4 presents a discussion that has been even more important for the development of the current conception of empathy: the discussion concerning *Einfühlung* which took place in German philosophy and psychology at the turn of the 19th century. I begin this chapter by giving a brief overview of the main uses to which the notion of *Einfühlung* was put, and I then present two philosophers whose views on empathy have been very influential in the contemporary philosophical discussion concerning empathy. Here I present the descriptions of *Einfühlung* and *Nachfühlen* given by the phenomenologists Edith Stein and Max Scheler. Both of these writers set out to describe a particular kind of state in which it appears to a person as if she is perceiving or apprehending another person's mental state. In the course of doing this they both came to describe a state in which a person feels an emotion because she believes or imagines that another person is feeling a similar emotion, but in which she feels this emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state herself. Although neither Stein nor Scheler has much to say about how this emotion is caused, I argue that it is reasonable to read them as embracing the second idea characteristic of the current conception of empathy. When it comes to first idea, however, the idea of emotional sharing, it is clear that it has no equivalent in Stein's account, and it seems reasonable to assume that it does not have so in Scheler's either.

In Part 2, I turn to the notion of empathy as emotional sharing in itself. This part aims to clarify the three ideas characteristic of this notion, and to articulate the notion of empathy as emotional sharing in the form of a definition.

In Chapter 5 I discuss some of the main accounts of empathy given by contemporary philosophers. Although this discussion focuses mainly on how these accounts describe the emotion that a person feels or experiences as part of having empathy with someone, I also make some remarks on how they explain how this emotion emerges. I divide these accounts into three groups based on how they describe the nature of the empathetic emotions. I begin with a fairly detailed discussion of the definition of 'empathy' proposed by Nancy E. Snow. Snow's account includes two of the ideas characteristic of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing, but it does not include the idea that empathetic emotions

are felt in a way that does not entail being in an emotional state. I argue against this view, and turn to two other types of theories for an alternative. First I consider the view that empathetic emotions are imagined emotions, then I turn to the view that they are off-line emotions.

In Chapter 6 I present an account of emotions and emotional states. Here I introduce a distinction between being in an emotional state, and merely feeling an emotion. I argue that if a person is in a particular kind of emotional state, e.g., if she is angry, then she (1) has an affective experience characteristic of this kind of state, or at least has a tendency or disposition to have such an experience, and (2) behaves in way characteristic of this kind of state, or at least has a tendency or disposition to behave in such a manner. I then argue, by way of some examples, that it is possible to feel an emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state. A person can, I claim, have the affective experience characteristic of a particular kind of emotional state, without necessarily having a tendency or disposition to behave in a way characteristic of this state. I call this phenomenon ‘merely feeling an emotion’. The chapter also contains an analysis of compassion, and an argument to the effect that emotional states are, in most cases, caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration on the part of the person in question.

In Chapter 7, finally, I put forth a definition of ‘empathy’ based on the claims made in the previous chapters. This definition specifies empathy as a state in which the empathizer merely feels an emotion that is similar to an emotion of the empathee’s. It also specifies how these emotions resemble each other, and how the empathetic emotion can and must be caused. The definition thus contains specifications of all three of the ideas characteristic of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing, thereby providing a clear way of understanding this phenomenon.

PART 1

ON THE HISTORY OF THE NOTION OF
EMPATHY AS EMOTIONAL SHARING

CHAPTER 2

SPINOZA AND HUME

2.1 Introduction

I will begin this short account of the history of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing by presenting the views of Baruch Spinoza and David Hume. Spinoza has been chosen mainly because his notion of imitation is the first clear approximation of the current conception of empathy; Hume has been chosen, both because of the fame and attention that his notion of sympathy has attracted and because his account can to some extent be seen as an extension of Spinoza's. Hume's and Spinoza's views on this issue are very similar, and I believe a comparison between them can be fruitful for the understanding of both.

However, in the hope of increasing our understanding of these philosophers a little further, something should be said about the background against which they proposed their theories. To give a thorough background is of course beyond the scope of this work, but there is one highly influential source that deserves to be mentioned. This source, which, I believe, spurred both Spinoza and Hume, was the theory of emotions and human motivation proposed by Thomas Hobbes (1651/1996).

Hobbes's view of man was, as is well known, that all men are egoists. Whatever a person does, he does because he has an interest in the outcome of the action, and all his interests are ultimately directed toward his own benefit. Applying the same reasoning to human emotions, this means that whatever emotion a person feels, he feels because he has an interest which is at stake in the current situation, and this interest is ultimately centered on his own happiness. Thus, if I, for example, become sad upon witnessing that you are sad, then, according to Hobbes, I feel this sadness because I have an interest or desire which is at stake in this situation. If this desire is a desire to see you happy, then I have it because I have something to gain from seeing you happy.

This theory of Hobbes's was the topic of much debate in British philosophy during the 17th and 18th centuries. Part of this discussion focused on the part of the theory that centered on egotism, that is, the claim that all of man's interests

are ultimately directed towards his own happiness. Bishop Butler formulated a famous argument against this claim, and some, including the Latitudinarian Divines, Hutcheson and possibly also Shaftesbury and Butler, countered Hobbes's claim and argued instead that man is indeed endowed with a general love towards all people, which makes him take an interest in the fortunes and misfortunes of others regardless of whether or not he stands to benefit from their happiness (Mackie 1980, 3; Herdt 1997, 30f.; Engell 1981, 144; Sidgwick 1886/1993, 195).

Another part of the discussion, however, was centered on what could be called Hobbes's belief-desire theory about the emotions, i.e., his claim that a person will not be affected by an emotion unless any desires or interests of his are at stake in the situation. This claim was countered by, for example, Hutcheson, James Arbuckle, Archibald Campbell and Adam Smith, who all claimed that a person can become affected with an emotion simply by imagining being in a situation where his interests are at stake. Thus, for me to be affected with sadness on perceiving the sadness of someone else, it is not necessary that I have a wish that this person were not sad. According to these writers, it may be sufficient for me simply to imagine that I am in the same situation as he is (Engell 1981, 145).

Spinoza and Hume seem to have been concerned exclusively with this latter claim of Hobbes. In fact, Spinoza agreed with Hobbes that all of man's interests are ultimately self-centered, and Hume held, at least in the *Treatise*, that man is not endowed with a natural love towards mankind, out of which an other-regarding interest might spring (T 3.2.1, 481). What they did not agree with Hobbes about, however, was the claim that a person's interests or desires have to be at stake in order for him or her to become affected with an emotion. Thus, both Hume and Spinoza sided with Hutcheson and Smith, in claiming that another person's sadness can give rise to sadness in me even though I do not have any interest in seeing this other person happy. The way in which Hume and Spinoza explained this, however, was strikingly different from the way in which Hutcheson and Smith explained it. Instead of saying that I become sad as a result of imagining myself in the situation of the other, Hume and Spinoza claimed that I become sad simply by entertaining the idea of his sadness. This was explained, by Spinoza, in terms of an *imitation of affects* and, by Hume, in terms of the *principle of sympathy*.

2.2 Spinoza on the Imitation of Affects

One of the first philosophers – perhaps the first – to take a significant step towards the current notion of empathy as emotional sharing was Spinoza.¹ In proposition 27 of the third part of the *Ethics* Spinoza writes:

If we imagine a thing like us, toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect (E3p27).²

Spinoza calls this process “imitation of affects” – “affectuum imitatio” – (E3p27s), and he does this even though it might appear as if it does not have to be a matter of a real imitation. Just because I imagine that a thing has a certain affect does not mean that this thing actually has it, and if it does not have it, then there is nothing that I could be said to have imitated.

Michael Della Rocca (1996, 249) has claimed that this is a problem that Spinoza never dealt with. According to C. D. Broad’s interpretation of Spinoza, however, it seems as if there is no problem in the first place. According to Broad’s interpretation, it follows from Spinoza’s use of the word ‘imagine’ that it is impossible to imagine that a person is affected with a particular affect, unless this person is or, at any rate, was affected with it (Broad 1930, 37). Hence, on this use of ‘imagine’ it is impossible to acquire an affect through imagining that another person is affected with a similar affect, unless this person actually is or was affected with it.

For my purposes it is not vital to determine which of these interpretations is the correct one. It does seem to me, however, as if E2p16 and its demonstration lend support to Broad’s interpretation (Broad himself does not give any references).³ In view of this, I have decided to continue using the term ‘imitation of affects’, and I will use it to refer to a process wherein a person acquires an

¹ To what extent Spinoza was the first philosopher to take a clear and important step towards this notion is of course difficult to tell. It is noteworthy, however, that H. A. Wolfson, who in his *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (1934/1962) tracks the sources of numerous of Spinoza’s ideas, does not mention any possible source for this particular idea.

² All quotations from the *Ethics* are taken from the translation by Edwin Curley (Spinoza 1677/1994). The method of citation has been adopted from *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (1996). “E3p27” refers to the *Ethics*, part 3, proposition 27. Other abbreviations to be used are ‘c’ for corollary, ‘d’ for definition (when not following a proposition number), ‘d’ for demonstration (when following a proposition number), ‘da’ for definition of the affects, and ‘s’ for scholium (note). Thus, “E3p27c2d” refers to *Ethics*, part 3, proposition 27, corollary 2, demonstration.

³ Cf. Margaret D. Wilson on Spinoza’s use of ‘imagine’: “In imagination the mind regards an external body as present, as a result of its *earlier* effects on the human body” (Wilson 1996, 102).

affect or an emotion solely through imagining – presumably in the sense specified by Broad – that another person, toward whom she has not been affected with an affect, is affected with a similar affect or emotion. Affects acquired through imitation will be called ‘imitation-affects’, and I will sometimes use terms such as ‘imitation-desire’ and ‘imitation-sadness’ to refer to specific types of imitation-affects. The thesis expressed in E3p27, finally, will be referred to as ‘the thesis of imitation’.

There are two parts of the thesis that I will not discuss in the following. The first is the notion of “a thing like us”, which is mentioned at the beginning of E3p27. Spinoza does not say anything explicit about this notion, and I will not attempt to do so for him. When discussing the thesis I will instead limit myself to talking about the one thing that Spinoza clearly held to be sufficiently like us, namely other persons.⁴

The other part of the thesis that I will not discuss is the phrase “toward which we have had no affect”. I will not argue for a specific interpretation of this phrase, but I will assume (1) that the past tense is a mistake and that the phrase should read ‘toward which we *have* no affect’ (compare, e.g., E3p27d), and (2) that not having an affect towards someone is equivalent to not having a pre-existing desire for his happiness or for his misfortune. Spinoza himself does not say anything explicit about what he means by ‘having an affect towards someone’. He only gives two examples, which are loving and hating someone. As far as I can see, the whole point of mentioning love and hate in this connection is that love implies a desire for the loved one’s well-being and hate a desire for the hated one’s ill-being. This is, in part, what it means to love and hate someone, according to Spinoza, and this is, I believe, the only reason why he mentions love and hate.

In view of these considerations, what we have is a thesis that says the following: If a person, S, imagines that another person, O, whom S neither loves or hates, is affected with an affect, then S will be affected with an affect that is similar to the one she imagines O to be affected with. This is the thesis of Spinoza that I want to discuss.

⁴ That Spinoza believed that other persons are sufficiently like us for the process of imitation to work, is clear from, e.g., E3p29d, where he uses the thesis of imitation to argue for the claim that “[f]rom the fact that we imagine *men* to love or hate something, we shall love or hate it” (my emphasis).

In connection with this one could also note that Spinoza apparently believed that the affects of non-human animals are different in nature from the affects of humans (E4p37s1). Whether he also believed that this difference is so great that humans cannot imitate the affects of animals, is unclear to me.

In the course of explaining this thesis, what I mainly want to show is how the notion of imitation of affects which is expressed in this thesis approximates the notion of empathy as emotional sharing that I introduced in Chapter 1. As I will argue, the notion of imitation only embodies one of the ideas characteristic of the current conception of empathy, the idea namely that the emotion that a person has as part of having empathy with someone else must be caused in a special way. Imitation of affects does not necessarily result in a state of emotional sharing, nor does it result in an affect that is felt or experienced in the special way characteristic of empathy. The way in which a person acquires an affect through imitation is, however, consistent with the way in which an emotion felt as part of having empathy must be caused.

Since the thesis of imitation concerns the imitation of affects, I shall begin this section by giving a short account of Spinoza's views on the affects. Unfortunately, due to Spinoza's confusing and at times seemingly contradictory treatment of the affects in the *Ethics*, it is beyond the scope of this work to give a complete account of his views. An outline of his general ideas should, however, suffice.⁵

According to Spinoza there are three kinds of *basic* or *primary* affects. Two of these are joy and sadness, and the third is desire (E3p11s). Desire, or, more specifically, the desire to persevere in her being, is the essence of a human being (E3d1). Joy and sadness, on the other hand, are changes in her power to persevere in her being: Joy is the passage from a lesser to a greater power to persevere; whereas sadness is the reverse passage from a greater to a lesser power to persevere (E3d2, E3d3).

In addition to the primary affects, Spinoza distinguishes and defines a number of what he sometimes calls *main affects* (E3p59s). Included in his list of such main affects are a number of states which we today would call 'emotions', some examples being fear, hope, remorse and gladness. The list, however, also includes some states that might not be considered emotions, e.g., aversion, longing and lust; and some which are clearly not emotions, e.g., character traits such as cruelty and timidity. In the remainder of this section I will, with the possible exception of love, only consider affects which are clear-cut examples of what we today call 'emotions'.

⁵ I will only consider Spinoza's views on the *passions*. The *actions*, or the affects of which the bearer herself is the adequate cause, are beyond the scope of the process of imitation, and therefore also beyond the scope of this dissertation. For an elaborate discussion of Spinoza's views on the affects, see Bennett (1984, chap. 11).

According to Spinoza, all main affects arise from or can be derived from the primary affects joy, sadness, and desire (E3p11s, E3p56). Put more generally, all main affects are species of the genera joy, sadness, and desire. For example, love and gladness are species of joy (E3d6, E3d16), fear and remorse are species of sadness (3d13, 3d17), and anger is an example of a species of desire (3d36).

Affects such as love and gladness, which are of the same genus but of different species, differ from each other with respect to the ideas that accompany the basic affect. According to Spinoza, all emotions are partly constituted by beliefs, thoughts, or ideas. Every affect is directed towards something, and no affect can occur in a person without this person having an idea about the thing toward which the affect is directed:

There are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the word affects of the mind, unless there is in the same individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, and the like (E2a3).

Thus, he who loves, always loves something, and when he loves, he experiences joy accompanied by the idea of the thing loved. Similarly, she who is glad, is always glad about something, and when she is glad, she experiences joy accompanied by the idea of that about which she is glad.

What distinguishes love from gladness are the ideas that accompany the joy of the different affects. Hence, love differs from gladness in that the idea of the loved object is of a different kind from the idea of that about which one is glad. “Love is”, according to Spinoza, “a joy, accompanied by the idea of an external cause” (E3da6), whereas “[g]ladness is a joy, accompanied by the idea of a past thing which has turned out better than we had hoped” (E3da16). Thus, although love and gladness are similar in that they are both partly constituted by joy, they differ from each other in that they are partly constituted by different kinds of ideas. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for all different species of joy, sadness and desire, respectively.

With this as a background we can now turn to the thesis of imitation. As was mentioned above, this thesis states that if a person, S, imagines that another person, O, whom S neither loves or hates, is affected with an affect, then S will be affected with an affect which is similar to the one she imagines O to be affected with. In what follows I will mainly try to explain what this thesis amounts to. To begin with I shall try to explain why Spinoza saw the need to introduce the thesis in the first place. After that I will focus on his views on the nature of the affects that a person acquires through the process of imitation, arguing, in particular, for the claim that Spinoza did not take these affects to be in any essential way different from the affects a person acquires in the “normal”

way. Finally, I will make some short comments on Spinoza's attempted proof of the thesis.

To see why Spinoza introduced the thesis of imitation in the first place, it is important to see that doing so enabled him to explain how a person can acquire an affect through perceiving that another person is affected with a similar affect without having to presuppose that the first person has any kind of prior interest in the happiness of the second.

According to Spinoza, if a person imitates an affect of another person, then she will be affected with a similar affect regardless of whether or not she loves or hates this other person. This might seem to contradict the thesis of imitation, which says (in my words) that if a person imagines that someone whom she *neither* loves nor hates is affected with an affect, then she will be affected with a similar affect. However, even though this could be taken to suggest that an imitation will not take place if the imitator loves or hates the other person, what it actually says and what Spinoza wants to say is only that the imitation will take place if the imitator does not love or hate the other person. This is clear from E3p23s and E3p47d, where Spinoza explicitly says that a person can imitate the affect of someone she loves or hates.⁶ Hence, the process of imitation will work regardless of whether or not the imitator loves or hates the other person.

From this it follows that if a person, S, is affected with an affect y as part of having imitated the affect of another person, O, then it cannot be the case that S is affected with y because S loves or hates O. Clearly, if S is affected with y as part of having imitated an affect of O, and if S does not love or hate O, it cannot be the case that S is affected with y because he loves or hates O. Since Spinoza does not say anything to indicate that the process of imitation should work any differently with regard to people whom we do love or hate, there is no reason to believe that this should not hold in these situations as well. Thus, whenever a person, S, is affected with an affect y as part of or as a result of having imitated the affect of another person O, then it is not the case that S is affected with y *because* she loves or hates O.

To see why it is important for Spinoza that the process of imitation does not depend upon the imitator's loving or hating the other person, one has to consider

⁶ According to Michael DellaRocca, it is even in accord with E3p27d where Spinoza, in Curley's translation, seems to be saying that if we imagine that someone we hate is affected with sadness, then we will be affected with joy and not sadness. According to DellaRocca, this is only the result of an unfortunate translation. What Spinoza actually says is, according to him, that "*to the extent that (eatenus)*" we hate the other, we will be affected with joy. This is perfectly compatible with saying that to the extent that we imagine that he is affected with sadness we too will become affected with sadness (DellaRocca 1996, 248).

why he introduced the thesis in the first place. As I see it, one of the main reasons why he did this was that he needed a way to explain certain instances of pity ('commiseratio').

Before introducing the thesis of imitation Spinoza had explained pity as a sadness that affects us when we imagine that someone we love is affected with sadness. He had also pointed out that when we pity someone we love, we do it because we love this person (E3p21d and E3p22s). At the same time, however, he did not want to deny that we sometimes also pity persons whom we do not love (E3p22s), and this was, in effect, the first thing he explained after introducing the thesis of imitation.

Put simply, Spinoza viewed pity as a sadness caused by the idea of sadness in someone else. It is easy to see that the thought that someone we love is sad can give rise to sadness in us. Given that we have an interest in the happiness of the persons we love, it is only natural that we become sad upon learning that they are sad. If, on the other hand, we assume, as Spinoza seems to, that we do not have any kind of interest in the happiness of the persons whom we do not love, it becomes somewhat more difficult to see how the thought of their sadness can give rise to sadness in us. Spinoza thought that it could, however, and he explained it by referring to the thesis of imitation: "imitation of the affects, when it is related to sadness is called *pity*" (E3p27s).⁷

Since Spinoza introduces the notion of imitation partly to explain how a person can pity someone whom she does not love, I take it that it is an essential part of this notion that whenever a person feels an affect as a result of having imitated the affect of someone else, then it is not the case that she feels this affect because she loves this other person.

Turning now to Spinoza's views on the nature of the affects that a person acquires through the process of imitation, the first thing to note is that, according

⁷ There are many problems with Spinoza's treatment of pity in the *Ethics*, which I am here ignoring. One main problem is that the book contains two different definitions of 'pity'. In the text (before the introduction of the thesis of imitation) 'pity' is defined as "*sadness which has arisen from injury ['damno'] to another*" (E3p22s). In the list of definitions of the affects, however (which comes after the introduction of the thesis), pity is said to be "a sadness, accompanied by the idea of an evil ['mali'] which has happened to another whom we imagine to be like us" (E3da18). Concerning the last of these definitions, one may note that if 'pity' is defined in this way and if 'evil' is taken to refer to something other than sadness, then the sadness which is caused by the thought that a loved one is sad can only constitute pity if it is accompanied by an idea of the evil that has happened to him. On the other hand, one may also note that if imitation of another person's sadness is to constitute pity on this definition, then the imitation has to be an imitation not only of the other's sadness but also of his idea about the evil that has happened to him.

to the thesis of imitation, if a person imagines that another person is affected with an affect, then she will become affected with an affect that is similar to the one she imagines the other to be affected with. This has two important consequences: One is that since it is possible – even on Broad’s interpretation of Spinoza’s use of the word ‘imagine’ – for a person, S, to be mistaken when she imagines that another person, O, is affected with an affect, there is no guarantee that the process of imitation will result in S’s acquiring an affect that is similar to a current affect of O’s. Hence, imitation of another person’s affect does not necessarily give rise to a state of emotional sharing.

Another equally important consequence is that, even in those situations where S has a correct image of O’s affect, the process of imitation does not guarantee that S will acquire an affect that is completely similar to O’s affect. The reason for this is that S may have a correct but nonetheless partial image of O’s affect. That is, she may imagine only that O is affected with, for example, an affect of the species joy, while he is in fact affected with love, or she may imagine only that O is affected with love towards someone, while he is in fact affected with love towards his brother. In situations like these one cannot expect that the degree of similarity between the actual affects of S and O should be any greater than that between O’s actual affect and S’s image of it.

In view of this latter consequence it seems reasonable to stipulate that what affect or what aspect of an affect is being imitated is determined by what affect or what aspect of an affect the imitator imagines the other person to be affected with. Thus, a person, S, could be said to imitate the love of another person, O, only to the extent that she imagines that O is affected with love, and she could be said to imitate O’s love towards his brother only to the extent that she imagines that O is affected with love towards his brother.⁸

Presumably Spinoza makes this kind of stipulation when he applies the thesis of imitation. At any rate, it is clear that he believed that if a person, S, imitates an affect of a particular genus of another person, O, then S will be affected with an affect of the same genus, and if she imitates an affect of a particular species, then she will be affected with an affect of the same species. For example, if S

⁸ However, since all affects, according to Spinoza, are directed towards something, in the first example the love of S has to be directed towards something, even if not necessarily towards O’s brother. Since it would be strange to say that S has become affected with love towards, e.g., ice-cream through having imitated O’s love, perhaps one could say, as I did earlier, that her love is directed towards someone or something, where the exact nature and identity of this someone or something are undetermined.

imitates O's desire, then S will be affected with desire (E3p27s), and if S imitates O's love, then S too will be affected with love (E3p29d).

Judging from Spinoza's examples, it is also clear that if S imitates a directed affect of O's, then S will acquire an affect that is both of the same kind, and directed towards the same object as the affect she imagines O to have. This is clear from, e.g., E3p29d and E3p31d, where Spinoza uses the thesis of imitation to prove that if we imagine that a person loves or hates someone, then we too will be affected with love or hate towards that someone. It also seems to be assumed in E3p27s, where Spinoza appears to be saying that if we imitate another person's desire for a certain thing, then we shall come to desire the same thing; and in E3p27c3d where it is said that if we pity someone as a result of having imitated his sadness about something, then we feel sadness about the same thing.

But what does it mean then to acquire an affect through this kind of imitation? What does it mean, for example, to acquire sadness through imitating another person's sadness? Does it mean that you become as sad as this other person, or does it only mean that you get some sense or impression of his sadness? Does it mean that you become as sad as you would have become had you been in his situation, or does it mean that you feel sadness in some other sense?

Spinoza's answer to these questions is that imitation of another person's sadness entails that you become affected with a sadness that is just as painful and real as the sadness that the other person is experiencing, and that you would have experienced had you felt sadness in his situation. I base this assertion on two considerations: the first is that Spinoza never says anything to the contrary, and the second is that this is the answer he needs to give if imitation of affects, and especially imitation of another person's sadness, is to be able to do the explanatory job that he wants it to do.

The first thing that speaks in favor of the claim that Spinoza viewed imitation-affects as being just as real as any other affects is his own way of describing these affects. In his descriptions of the imitation-affects in E3p27 and the propositions immediately following E3p27, he does not say anything to indicate that they should be any different from imitated affects or affects acquired in the normal way.⁹ In E3p27s he says that if you imitate another person's desire for a certain thing, then you will be affected with a desire for the same thing, nowhere

⁹ Although Spinoza does not say anything to indicate that it should be impossible to imitate an affect that another person has acquired through imitating the affect of someone else, I will, in what follows, only consider cases where the imitated affect has been acquired in the ordinary way.

indicating that this imitation-desire should be any less urgent and driving than the imitated desire. Similarly, in E3p27c3d he uses the thesis of imitation to deduce that “[w]hatever affects with sadness what we pity, affects us also with a like sadness”, never saying anything to the effect that this imitation-sadness should be any less painful than the imitated sadness.¹⁰ Finally, in E3p29d he makes the claim that if you imitate another person’s love or hate of a certain thing, then you will start to love or hate that same thing. No indication is given that this love should be any less satisfying than the imitated love nor that this hate should be any less painful or burning than the imitated hate.

This silence indicates that Spinoza did not believe that the affects that arise as a result of imitation are any less real than the imitated affects. Thus, although imitation-affects are caused in a different way from the imitated affects, they do not seem to differ from the imitated affects in any other way. There is, in other words, nothing to indicate that a person who has imitated another person’s joy, sadness or anger is not glad, sad or angry in the same sense as this other person.

Now, concerning those imitation-affects that are species of the genera joy and sadness, one may also note that, since Spinoza does not say anything to the contrary, it is natural to assume that if a person is affected with imitation-joy, then her power to persevere in her being is in the process of increasing, whereas if she is affected with imitation-sadness, then her power to persevere in her being is in the process of decreasing. As I noted earlier, to be affected with joy or sadness is, according to Spinoza, for one’s power to persevere to go through such changes. Since imitation-joy and imitation-sadness are affects of the genera joy and sadness, it should presumably also hold for them.

This leads to the second consideration speaking in favor of the claim that imitation-affects differ from imitated affects, or affects acquired in the ordinary way, only with respect to their causal histories. As already mentioned, one of the main reasons why Spinoza introduced the thesis in the first place was that he needed a way of explaining how we can come to pity people whom we do not love, i.e., people in whose happiness we do not have a prior interest. Now, by way of doing this Spinoza could also explain how it can happen that we sometimes become motivated to help and relieve the sufferings of people whom we do not love. However, if pity – and especially pity that arises from imitation – is to be able to do this, then the sadness which in part constitutes pity has to be

¹⁰ On the contrary, as I will later show, judging from the conclusions Spinoza draws from this corollary, he actually must have held that the imitation-sadness is just as painful and real as the imitated sadness.

a real sadness, i.e., it has to be a sadness that entails a decrease in the bearer's power to persevere in her being.

The explanation of how pity that arises from imitation can motivate a person to help can be found in E3p27c3d. This is the demonstration of E3p27c3, which says that "[a]s far as we can, we strive to free a thing we pity from its suffering." The demonstration reads as follows:

Whatever affects with sadness what we pity, affects us also with a like sadness (by p27). And so (by p13) we shall strive to think of whatever can take away the thing's existence, *or* destroy the thing, that is (by p9s), we shall want to destroy it, *or* shall be determined to destroy it. And so we strive to free the thing we pity from its suffering, q.e.d. (E3p27c3d)

There are plenty of things in this passage that need to be commented on. The first thing to note is that if pity that arises from imitation, by itself, is supposed to lead to a striving to remove whatever is the cause of the other person's sadness, then the imitation of his affect has to be an imitation not only of his sadness, but also of his idea about that which is the cause of the sadness. Thus, if imitation of another person's sadness is to constitute pity, it has to be an imitation of this person's sadness at or about something.

A second thing to note is that Spinoza is not content with saying that if a person has imitated another person's sadness, then her image of this person's sadness has caused sadness in her. In the above passage he also says that the thing, state, or event that has caused the other person to be sad is a cause of the imitator's sadness as well. Thus, if I imitate your sadness that your father has died, then I become affected with a sadness that is caused, not only by the fact that you are sad, but also by the fact that your father has died.

In my opinion, this, taken by itself, makes it natural to view imitation-affects as being just as real as ordinary affects. But there is more. What is perhaps the most important message of the passage quoted above is that if you imitate the sadness of another person, then you will become motivated to do something about the thing, state, or event that has caused the other to be sad. However, as the passage also makes clear, what happens is not really or not only that you become motivated to help him. What happens is also, or perhaps rather, that you become motivated to help yourself. The only reason why you want to do something about the thing, state, or event that has caused the other person to be sad is that this also happens to be a cause of sadness in you.

Now, judging from Spinoza's explanation of how sadness motivates a person to action, it seems that if imitation-sadness is to have this motivating power, then it has to be just as real as ordinary sadness. The reason why sadness motivates a person to action is, according to Spinoza, that sadness, as a decrease

in a person's power to persevere in her being, is incompatible with her basic desire to sustain and increase that same power (E3p37d). Hence, according to this explanation, if a person, S, is motivated to relieve another person, O, of his sadness, then this is because the fact that O is affected with sadness leads to a decrease in S's power to persevere in her being. Consequently, if imitation-sadness is to be able to motivate a person to action, then imitation-sadness, in just the same way as ordinary sadness, has to entail a decrease in her power of self-preservation. Thus, imitation-sadness is just as real as ordinary sadness.

This concludes my explanation of Spinoza's thesis of imitation. I will end this section on Spinoza by giving a short account of his proof of the thesis. I have saved this for last for two reasons: one is that I have nothing new to say about this proof, and the second is that I find the proof less interesting than the thesis itself.

Quoted in its entirety, the proof, or the demonstration, reads as follows:

The images of things are affections of the human body whose ideas represent external bodies as present to us (by 2p17s), that is (by 2p16), whose ideas involve the nature of our body and at the same time the present nature of the external body. So if the nature of the external body is like the nature of our body, then the idea of the external body we imagine will involve an affection of our body like the affect of the external body. Consequently, if we imagine someone like us to be affected with some affect, this imagination will express an affection of our body like this affect. And so, from the fact that we imagine a thing like us to be affected with an affect, we are affected with a like affect. But if we hate a thing like us, then (by p23) we shall be affected with an affect contrary to its affect, and not like it, q.e.d. (E3p27d)

C.D. Broad (1930, 37f.) has, with the approval of Jonathan Bennett (1984, 281), given the following interpretation of this passage: "If A and B be two bodies of similar nature, and a certain modification of A determines a certain modification of B, then the latter modification will resemble the former." (Broad 1930, 37) This is, according to Broad, the general principle behind Spinoza's argument. With the help of this principle, Broad claims, Spinoza argues as follows: If a person, A, is affected with a certain affect, and if another person, B, perceives this, then there will be a modification in A's body which has determined a modification in B's body. Granted the above-mentioned principle it then follows that the modification in B's body will resemble the modification in A's body, and since the latter is correlated with an affect, the former will be correlated with a similar affect. Hence, if B perceives that A is affected with a certain affect, B will be affected with a similar affect (Broad 1930, 37).

Broad considered this proof to be “a complete failure” (1930, 38). He made two objections: (1) the general principle is false; and (2) the general principle would not be sufficient even if it were true.

(1) That the principle is false can be shown by a simple example. Says Broad:

If one human body emits a shriek and a second human body be within earshot it will be affected by the event in the former. But it will not in general be so affected as to emit a shriek itself (Broad 1930, 37).

(2) That the principle is not sufficient as a proof of the thesis is also fairly evident. Even if the shriek of the first body were sufficient to make the other body emit a shriek too, that would not by itself guarantee that whatever affect was associated with the shriek of the first body, would also be associated with the shriek of the second (Broad 1930, 37f.). Now, it is a fact that people often “mirror” each other and imitate the behavior of the people around them. Sometimes this no doubt also gives rise to affective experiences that resemble the experiences of the ones imitated (Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, 1994). The problem, however, is that this does not happen with the necessity that Spinoza seems to believe and that is required in order to prove his thesis of imitation.

In my opinion this is enough to show the falsity of the thesis. The thesis, however, also faces a *reductio ad absurdum*, which it might be of some interest to point out. The reason imitation of another person’s expression of an affect ensures an imitation of the affect itself is that, on Broad’s reading, if a modification of one body determines a modification of another body, then the latter modification will resemble the former. Hence, if the first modification is or was accompanied by an affect, then the latter modification will be accompanied by a similar affect. Now, the problem is that if this were true, then we would have an excellent way of distinguishing between genuine and false expressions of emotions, i.e., expressions which are and which are not accompanied by emotions. We would simply have to imitate the bodily expressions and pay attention to whether or not this gives rise to any emotion in us. If it does give rise to an emotion, then the expression was genuine; if it does not give rise to an emotion, then the expression was false. This, I take it, is absurd.

Summarizing Spinoza’s theory of imitation of affects, we may say that its central claim is that it is possible for a person to acquire an affect through imagining that another person is affected with a similar affect without the first person’s having to have any prior interest in the happiness of the second. Thus, a person can, according to Spinoza, come to feel sadness upon witnessing another person being sad without having to have a prior wish to see this other person happy.

In making this claim Spinoza gives expression to at least one of the ideas that have become central to the current notion of empathy as emotional sharing. This is the idea that if a person feels an emotion as part of having empathy with another person, then her emotion is in some sense dependent upon this other person's state or situation or upon her having an idea of this person's state or situation, but not upon her having a prior desire for this person's happiness or a prior aversion towards his unhappiness.

To the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing belong two additional ideas: the idea that empathy requires that two (or more) people simultaneously experience similar emotions, and the idea that the empathizer must experience her emotion in a way that does not entail that she is in the corresponding emotional state. As we have seen, neither of these ideas are entailed by Spinoza's notion of imitation of affects. Since the process of imitation depends upon an act of imagining (albeit in a slightly special sense) that another person is affected with an affect and not upon this person's actually being affected with it, imitation of affects does not necessarily lead to a state of emotional sharing. And, given the ways in which Spinoza describes the affects that result from the process of imitation, and given his claim that such affects can motivate a person to action, it seems as if he did not see imitation-affects as differing in any significant respects from affects acquired in the ordinary way – except, of course, from being caused in a different way.

2.3 Hume on Sympathy

Spinoza may have been the first philosopher to introduce something resembling the current notion of empathy into his thinking. The philosopher who has become the best known for it, however, is without doubt David Hume. Hume's views on emotional sharing, or 'sympathy' as he calls it, bear a striking resemblance to Spinoza's views on imitation of affects. The notions themselves, their explanations, and the uses to which they put the notions are all so similar that it is now generally believed that Hume not only had read the *Ethics*, but also that he was to some extent influenced by what Spinoza said there (Cassidy 1979, Klever 1993/2001).

Hume uses the word 'sympathy' both in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40/1978) and in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751/1975). In *Treatise*, which is the work I shall be concentrating on, the word is primarily used to denote a special principle for the transference or, as Hume calls it, "communication", of beliefs, inclinations, and passions between different

individuals (T 2.1.11, 316).¹¹ This is what Hume generally meant by ‘sympathy’, and this is also the sense in which I will use the term in the rest of this section. I will, however, mostly limit myself to speaking about the communication of passions or emotions.¹²

In order to avoid any possible confusion, it should probably be pointed out from the outset that Hume made a sharp distinction between, on the one hand, what he called ‘sympathy’ and, on the other, what he called ‘pity’ and ‘compassion’ and what we today would call ‘sympathy’. The feeling of concern for another person, which we today associate with sympathy, should not be confused with Hume’s brand of sympathy. The former is a passion or emotion, whereas the latter is a principle for the communication of, for instance, passions. To keep these things separated, I will, for the rest of this section, reserve the word ‘sympathy’ for Hume’s kind of sympathy. The feeling of concern that we today associate with ‘sympathy’ will be denoted by Hume’s own expressions ‘pity’ and ‘compassion’.

In what follows I will be concerned with presenting Hume’s views on sympathy and with showing how he uses this notion to explain pity. I will also make some comparisons between the accounts of Spinoza and Hume, but, most importantly, I will try to show how Hume’s notion of sympathy anticipates and approximates the current notion of empathy as emotional sharing. As will become evident, Hume’s notion of sympathy does not entail emotional sharing. Nor does it entail that emotions acquired through sympathy are felt or experienced in any special way. What the notion does entail, however, or rather what the notion signifies, is a process of acquiring an emotion, that is consistent with the way in which an emotion felt as part of empathy has to be acquired. This is how Hume’s notion of sympathy, like Spinoza’s of imitation, anticipates the current conception of empathy.

¹¹ All references to *A Treatise of Human Nature* will have the following form: ‘T’, standing for *Treatise*, followed by the numbers of the book, part and section referred to. In most cases I have also added the number of the page in Hume (1739-40/1978).

¹² I will not have anything to say about the changes which seem to have occurred in Hume’s thinking about sympathy and benevolence between the publication of the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*. I agree with MacNabb when he writes that “[i]n the *Treatise* ‘benevolence’ is, indeed, regarded as an original instinct; but it is a confined benevolence, a desire for the happiness of our own friends; there is no natural and original love of man for man as such. The concern for the general happiness is due to the mechanism of sympathy, the natural attraction of ideas and impressions. In the *Enquiry* all this is dropped, and a natural and universal benevolence or ‘sentiment of humanity’ is substituted.” (MacNabb 1951, 190)

In order to understand the workings of Hume's principle of sympathy, some words need to be said about the general philosophy of mind that underlies the whole project of the *Treatise*. As the title suggests, *A Treatise of Human Nature* is a work about human nature. It is not a work about the physical, non-human nature. The scope of the *Treatise* is made clear already in the first sentence:

All perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness (T 1.1.1, 1).

Ideas are, according to Hume, weaker copies of impressions. Impressions are not necessarily copies of anything at all. Ideas refer in some sense to impressions, whereas impressions do not refer to anything. Impressions should be understood in analogy with bodily sensations, like itches or aches, which are not generally considered to refer to anything beyond themselves.¹³ Simple impressions are, as Hume often points out, undefinable.

Emotions, or what Hume collects under the somewhat wider notion of *passions*, are a kind of impressions. In Book 2, "Of the Passions", Hume distinguishes between original and secondary impressions (T 2.1.1, 275). This distinction corresponds to one previously made between impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection (T 1.1.2). Impressions of sensation, or original impressions, are the first impressions a person can have. They are such that they can arise in a person without him or her needing to have had some previous impression or idea. Some examples of such impressions are sense impressions and sensations of bodily pleasure and pain (T 2.1.1, 275).

Secondary impressions or impressions of reflection are impressions which cannot arise in a person without him or her having had some previous impression or idea. According to Hume secondary impressions arise from original impressions or from their corresponding ideas (T 2.1.1, 275). One example of a secondary impression is a desire for a certain thing, which cannot arise but from a previous idea or impression of that same thing.¹⁴

¹³ An exception to this view of bodily sensations is Michael Tye's representationalism which holds that all mental states represent or refer to something (Tye 1995).

¹⁴ When I say that an impression is an impression of a physical item in the world I do not wish to endorse the view that Hume saw impressions as referring to such items. What I mean is only that the impression is such that it presents us with the image of what we generally take to be a physical item in the world.

Passions are secondary impressions which arise from impressions of pain and pleasure or from vivid ideas of pain and pleasure (T 2.3.7; T 2.3.9).¹⁵ Passions can be either direct or indirect. Direct passions are those that arise immediately from good or evil, pain or pleasure (T 2.1.1, 276). The examples Hume gives are desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, fear, despair, and security (T 2.1.1, 277). Indirect passions, on the other hand, are passions that arise from good or evil, pain or pleasure, together with certain other qualities (T 2.1.1, 276). One example of an indirect passion is pride, which, according to Hume, cannot arise immediately from something good or pleasant by itself, but also requires an idea of this thing as something that is associated with oneself. Thus, although the contemplation of a beautiful house may give rise to a sensation of pleasure, it cannot, by itself, give rise to a feeling of pride. For pride to arise I also have to entertain the idea of the house as something that is in some way connected with me. Only then can the pleasure I take in contemplating the house give rise to a feeling of pride (T 2.1.1). Pride is only one example of an indirect passion. The other examples Hume gives are humility, ambition, vanity, love, hatred, envy, pity, malice, and generosity (T 2.1.1, 277).

That passions are impressions means that passions do not refer to anything beyond themselves. Even though they differ in their causal histories from bodily sensations like itches and aches, passions such as pride, fear, and pity are just as simple and undefinable as such sensations.

This view of the passions is clearly stated by Hume in a number of passages. It is evident, for example, in his opening words about pride and humility, which state that

[t]he passions of PRIDE and HUMILITY being simple and uniform impressions, 'tis impossible we can ever, by a multitude of words, give a just definition of them, or indeed of any of the passions. The utmost we can pretend to is a description of them, by an enumeration of such circumstances as attend them... (T 2.1.2, 277).¹⁶

Since passions are simple and undefinable impressions, it follows that passions cannot be defined in terms of any thoughts or ideas that may

¹⁵ There are some exceptions to this rule. First of all, there are, according to Hume, some passions, such as the desire to punish our enemies, which, "properly speaking, produce good and evil, and proceed not from them" (T 2.3.9, 439). Second, there are all the sympathetic passions, which, as we will see, do not arise from pain or pleasure either (at least not our own).

¹⁶ See also the first sentence of part 2, "Of Love and Hatred": "'Tis altogether impossible to give any definition of the passions of love and hatred; and that because they produce merely a simple impression, without any mixture or composition" (T 2.2.1, 329).

accompany them. This does not mean that passions cannot occur in constant conjunction with certain thoughts or ideas; pride, for example, is, according to Hume, always connected with the idea of oneself. What it does mean, however, is that this connection cannot be of a logical or conceptual kind; that is, it does not and cannot follow from the definition of 'pride' that pride is always connected with the idea of oneself. That pride is always pride of oneself is, as it were, a matter of empirical fact (T 2.1.5, 286f.).

Given that passions are something that a person feels or experiences, and given that Hume held passions to be simple and indefinable, it seems reasonable to assume that he thought that different passions feel differently. Clearly, he did not think that there are no differences among different kinds of passions. Some passions, such as pride and love, are pleasant, whereas others, like humility and hate, are unpleasant (T 2.1.5, 286; T 2.2.1, 331). Furthermore, since Hume himself speaks about different passions with such ease, it seems likely that he believed that his ideas of these passions corresponded to simple impressions. Now, since he obviously assumed that the ideas are ideas of different passions, he must have assumed that each idea corresponds to a different impression. Hence, it seems likely both that he viewed different passions as being constituted by different impressions and that he thought it possible to distinguish between different passions simply on the basis of these impressions.

With this as a background we may now turn to the principle of sympathy. Hume uses no small words when he first introduces it in the *Treatise*:

No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own (T 2.1.11, 316).

In much the same way as Spinoza, Hume claims that in some situations the thought of another person having a certain passion is enough to give rise to a similar passion in you. Of course, Hume is aware of the fact that we often become glad when we see that someone we care about is glad, and, conversely, that we often become sad when we see that someone we care about is sad. However, like Spinoza, Hume claims that gladness can beget gladness and sadness even in situations where the person who is experiencing gladness or sadness is someone whom you do not care about. This is where sympathy comes in.

The most explicit and detailed statement of the principle of sympathy can be found in the section on the love of fame (T 2.1.11). It is worth quoting in full:

When any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it. This idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection (T 2.1.11, 317).

The core of the theory of sympathy is the claim that if a person has an idea of a passion of someone else, then, in some situations, this idea can take on an increasing force and vivacity and turn into the passion itself. I shall shortly explain this claim more fully. Before I do that, however, I wish to point out that, despite what Hume says in this passage, it is not the case that sympathy requires that one has come to the idea of the other's passion through observing him behave in a way indicative of a certain passion. As Hume later points out, one can also arrive at this idea through observing a state or event that is likely to be a cause of a passion in him. Thus, we may come to believe that a person is, for example, sad, either through observing that he is, e.g., crying, or through the observation that something sad has happened to him. In both cases it is possible that we may come to sympathize with him (T 3.3.1, 576).

What makes possible the transition of an idea of a passion into a passion itself is Hume's theory of ideas, impressions, and passions. According to this theory there are no qualitative differences between the idea of a passion, an impression of a passion, and the passion itself. The only apparent difference between an idea of a passion and an impression of a passion is a difference in the force and vivacity with which they strike the mind: an impression just appears more vividly than an idea.¹⁷ And when it comes to an impression of a passion and the passion itself, there is, of course, no difference at all. A passion is, according to Hume, identical with its impression.

The theory just presented enables Hume to explain the transition from an idea of a passion to the passion itself as being simply a matter of an increase in the force and vivacity with which the idea strikes the mind. However, not just any idea of a passion can make this change. According to Hume, there are three relations between the sympathizer and the person who is the object of the sympathy which enable and simplify the transition. The most important of these is without doubt the relation of similarity. The other two relations are the relations of contiguity, and of cause and effect (T 2.1.11, 317f, 320). I will

¹⁷ When Hume says that this is the only difference between impressions and ideas, he seems to forget his own claim that ideas are copies of impressions. (Ingvar Johansson has pointed this out to me.)

elaborate on these relations in the reverse order, starting with the relation of causality.

The relation of cause and effect can appear in two different stages of the process of sympathy. Its most important appearance occurs at the stage prior to sympathy proper, when the potential sympathizer infers from the behavior or the circumstances of the person to be sympathized with that the latter is affected with a certain passion. Without this inference from the cause or effect of a passion to the passion itself, the sympathizer would not arrive at an idea of the other's passion, and without this idea the principle of sympathy could not even begin to do its work (T 2.1.11, 317, 320).

The relation of cause and effect can also occur at the stage where the idea of a passion transforms into the passion itself. Here it serves as one of the relations between the sympathizer and the sympathee, which enable and/or simplify the transition from idea to passion. Hume mentions "the relation of blood, being a species of causation" (T 2.1.11, 318) as one example of a relation of causation that can have this effect.

It is clear, however, that the most important relations at this stage of the process are the relations of similarity and contiguity. That the sympathizer and the sympathee are similar to each other, Hume took to be a necessary requirement for the sympathizer's idea of the other's passion to transform into an impression of that same passion (T 2.1.11, 320). That they are close to each other was also said to be a necessary condition (T 2.1.11, 320), but this I do not think that Hume actually believed. Admittedly, closeness is a vague notion, but unless one is prepared to give it such a wide interpretation as to make it practically useless, I find it more reasonable to assume that Hume saw this relation as something that simplifies the transition from the idea to the passion.

Hume does not say much about what degree of similarity is required for sympathy to take place. What he does say is that there is a natural resemblance between all human beings which is sufficient to make sympathy between all people possible (T 2.1.11, 318, T 2.2.7, 369). He adds that sympathy comes more easily between people who are also similar to each other with respect to other, more special traits and properties, such as manners, characters, country, and language (T 2.1.1, 318).

As for the relation of contiguity, Hume is also relatively quiet. It seems clear, however, that both contiguity in time and contiguity in space can enable and simplify sympathy (T 2.3.7, 427). Thus, as the distance between people increases, their ability and propensity to sympathize with each other decreases. We sympathize more easily with our neighbors than with people who live in

other parts of the world, and we are more prone to share the emotions of people of our own time than of people of distant times.

The distance between different persons may also be important in yet another way. Although Hume himself does not describe it in terms of the relation of contiguity, when he discusses the example of the ship in distress, it is easy to understand him as saying that the spectator's tendency to sympathize with the sailors increases as the distance between them decreases:

Suppose the ship to be driven so near me, that I can perceive distinctly the horror, painted on the countenance of the seamen and passengers, hear their lamentable cries, see the dearest friends give their last adieu, or embrace with resolution to perish in each others arms: No man has so savage a heart as to reap any pleasure from such a spectacle, or withstand the motions of the tenderest compassion and sympathy (T 3.3.2, 594).

Here contiguity in space lets the spectator have a clear and direct view of the agony of the sailors on the ship. This is a different kind of contiguity from those kinds already mentioned, but it seems reasonable to assume that Hume also saw this as something that can help and enable sympathy.

The three relations of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect are the relations which, according to Hume, explain why the idea of another's passion sometimes turns into an actual impression of the same passion. Although Hume is somewhat wary on the issue of exactly how important these relations are for the emergence of sympathy, it seems safe to say (1) that for a person, S, to come to the belief that another person, O, is affected with a certain passion, S has to infer O's passion from a knowledge of O's situation and/or behavior, and in this process the principle of causality must be at work; (2) that for S's idea of O's passion to make the transition from an idea to a passion, S has to share some basic similarity with O; and (3) that S's idea of O's passion makes this transition more easily if S is also related to O in terms of contiguity and in terms of the relation of cause and effect.

Before moving on to the question of why these relations are so important for the emergence of a sympathetic passion, I want to point out that nowhere in the discussion of these relations does Hume suggest that a relation of love, concern or interest between the sympathizer and the object of her sympathy plays any role in the explanation of this emergence. Hume would no doubt say that in most cases we sympathize more easily with friends and family than with complete strangers, but the reason we do that would, as Dabney Townsend has pointed out (2001, 102), not be because we have a prior interest in the happiness of our friends and family. The reason would simply be that we are more closely related to friends and family through the relations of resemblance and contiguity, and, at

least in the case of family, through the relation of cause and effect. If a person, S, is affected with a passion as a result of having sympathized with another person O, then that passion of S is in no way dependent upon S's having a concern for or an interest in the happiness of O.

Why then are the relations of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect so important for the emergence of sympathy? Why is it so important that I be related to you in terms of these relations if my idea of your passion is to be able to turn into an actual passion? The answer to this question lies in Hume's explanation of how an idea of a passion makes the transition from an idea into a passion:

'Tis evident, that the idea, or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that any thing can in this particular go beyond it. Whatever object, therefore, is related to ourselves must be conceived with a like vivacity of conception according to the foregoing principles... (T 2.1.11, 317).

Here is how Hume's explanation is generally understood (see, e.g., Mercer 1972, 27; Herdt 1997, 39, 40): When an idea of another's passion transforms into a similar passion, what happens is that the liveliness of our conception of ourselves is transferred to the idea of the other's passion, making this idea so lively as to become a passion itself. For this transference to occur, however, there must be some kind of relation between ourselves and the person whom we believe to be affected with a passion.¹⁸ The relations that enable and simplify the transference are the relations of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. Hence, the more strongly I am related to another person in terms of these relations, the greater the chance that my conception of myself will enliven my idea of his passion and transform this idea into a passion (T 2.1.11, 318).

There are a few comments that I would like to make concerning Hume's statement of the explanation and concerning this particular interpretation of it. First, and as I have already pointed out, this interpretation does not fit entirely with what Hume himself says in the passage quoted above. While the interpretation says that the emergence of a sympathetic passion is dependent upon our being related to the other person, Hume seems to be saying that it is dependent upon our being related to his passion. However, judging from what

¹⁸ Thus, although it does not seem to fit exactly with what Hume is saying, the word 'object', in the sentence "[w]hatever object, therefore, is related to ourselves must be conceived with a like vivacity of conception...", is generally taken to denote the person with whom one sympathizes. The problem with this reading is, of course, that it is not the idea of this person that is transformed into an impression, but only the idea of his passion.

Hume says elsewhere, and in particular the stress he puts on the importance of the relations of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect, which surely are relations between the sympathizer and the person who is the object of the sympathy, I do not think that one should pay too much attention to this. The important relation is clearly the relation between the persons involved in the process of sympathy.

Second, it might seem as if what Hume says here about an impression of ourselves is in direct opposition to his denial in Book 1 that there is any impression of a self (T 1.4.6, 251f.). However, as Páll S. Árdal (1966, 44f.) and many following him have pointed out, this is not so. Hume did not deny that most people have an idea of themselves. What he did deny was that there is a constant and invariable impression which corresponds to the idea of a constant and invariable self that certain other philosophers claimed to possess. The idea of themselves that most people have does not correspond to this kind of simple and immutable impression. What each person's idea of him- or herself corresponds to is instead "a connected succession of perceptions" (T 2.1.2, 277). This is the impression of ourselves which "is always intimately present with us", and this is also the impression that is responsible for the enlivening of the idea of another's passion in sympathy.

Third and finally, there is a question one could raise against this theory of Hume's. The question is simply, why is it only the ideas of other people's passions that make this transition from ideas to impressions? If my close relation to my brother – in terms of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect – turns my idea of his joy into an impression of joy, why does not the same relation turn my ideas of, say, his nose or his car into the corresponding impressions? As far as I am aware, Hume never answers this question.

Surely one could raise other questions and objections to Hume's explanation of the process of sympathy. For one thing, I believe one could call into question the distinction between impressions and ideas, upon which the whole explanation is based. I will not embark on such a criticism here, however. As in the case of Spinoza, I am not primarily interested in how the process is explained and argued for. What I am interested in are the descriptions of the process and, most importantly, the end-product of the process. It is to Hume's views on the products, the sympathetic passions, that I now turn.

I will begin this part of the section by considering what degree of similarity is required between the passions of two persons for the one to be said to have sympathy with the other. After that I will move on to the question of the nature of the sympathetic passions – do these passions exhibit any essential differences

from ordinary passions or are they just ordinary passions evoked in an extraordinary way?

As in the case of Spinoza, the question as to what degree of similarity is required between the passions of S and O, for S to be said to have sympathy with O, is somewhat badly put. The reason for this is that, according to the principle of sympathy, S will be affected with the kind of passion that S believes O to be affected with, not with the passion O actually is affected with. Thus, if S takes O's tears of sadness to be tears of joy, S could be feeling joy and on account of this be said to have sympathy with O, even though S and O are experiencing diametrically opposed emotions.

Let us then assume, for the sake of argument, that S is not mistaken in her belief about what passion O is affected with. In that case it follows from the principle of sympathy that if S has sympathy with O, then S will be affected with a passion that is of the same qualitative kind as the passion of O. If S believes that O is affected with sadness, and O actually is affected with sadness, then both S and O will be affected with sadness; and if S believes that O is affected with pride, and O actually is affected with pride, then both S and O will be affected with pride; etc.

Things become more complicated when one turns to the question of whether or not Hume thought that sympathy with respect to another person's directed emotion requires being affected with a similar passion directed towards the same object. The reason for this is that it is not clear to me whether or not Hume believed that it is possible to acquire a directed passion through sympathy. That is, it is not clear to me whether or not he believed that the process of sympathy can make a person take over both another person's passion, i.e., another person's simple and indefinable impression, and his idea of the thing or event toward which the passion is directed. To be true, it does not seem as if Hume's system in any way prevents him from saying that this is possible. The problem is that he himself does not say whether or not it is possible – at least not to my knowledge.¹⁹

¹⁹ The closest Hume gets to saying that it is possible to acquire a directed passion through sympathy is perhaps in his explanation of how we can come to approve and disapprove of certain actions, traits, and sentiments, even though these qualities do not in any way affect our interests. What happens is that we sympathize with the feelings of those who are affected by these qualities, and it is these sympathetic passions that give rise to our approval and disapproval of the qualities (T 3.3.7, 618). This might seem to require that we become affected with sympathetic passions directed towards the same qualities as the passions of those with whom we sympathize. If it does – and I say *if* it does – it is, however, not necessary that we acquire these directed passions through the process of sympathy. A directed

Thus, although it is clear that Hume would have said that if a person, S, sympathizes with, for example, the love of another person, O, then S too will become affected with love, it is somewhat more difficult to tell whether or not he also believed that sympathy with respect to O's love towards his mother implies being affected with love towards O's mother. As I have said, I have not seen Hume say anything like this in the *Treatise*, and it does not seem to me as if he would have had any direct use for such a claim in that book.

One may note, however, that had Hume claimed that sympathy with respect to a directed passion requires being affected with a similar passion directed towards the same object, then he could not have claimed that this holds in all cases. Interestingly enough he would have had to make exceptions for some of the passions that he devotes the most attention to in the *Treatise*, namely all instances of pride and humility, and some instances of love and hate. The reason for this is that pride and humility are always directed towards oneself, whereas love and hate are always directed towards someone else. Hence, if sympathy with respect to another person's directed passion always implied being affected with a similar passion directed towards the same object, that would have meant that if I had sympathy with respect to your pride about yourself, I would have been affected with pride about you; and if I had sympathy with respect to your love of me, I would have been affected with love towards myself. Since this contradicts the claims that pride is always pride about oneself and that love is always love of another, Hume cannot have claimed that sympathy with respect to these passions requires being affected with a similar passion directed towards the same object. The same thing would hold, *mutatis mutandis*, for sympathy with respect to your humility about yourself, and for sympathy with respect to your hate towards me.

Turning now to the question concerning the nature of the sympathetic passion, I believe one must conclude that, according to Hume, sympathetic passions are passions in just the same sense as any other kind of passion. The only peculiar thing about sympathetic passions is the way in which they are brought about. Whereas sympathetic passions are born out of an idea of another

passion can be analyzed in terms of, on the one hand, a simple and indefinable impression and, on the other, an idea of the thing that is the object of the passion. Now, even though it does seem possible that the process of sympathy could give us an idea of the thing that is the cause of pleasure or pain in someone else, it is clearly not necessary that we acquire the idea in this way. When we come to approve or disapprove of a certain quality through sympathizing with the pleasure or pain of another person, our idea of this quality may just as well have come to us through a simple observation that this quality seems to be causing him or her pain or pleasure.

person's passion, which has become transformed into a real passion, ordinary passions are born out of impressions and vivid ideas of pain or pleasure, and, as in the case of the indirect passions, of such ideas and impressions together with certain other qualities (T 2.1.1, 276f.; T 2.3.6, 427; T 2.3.9). If you are affected with an ordinary passion then your passion has been caused either by a direct experience of pain or pleasure, or by a vivid idea of a pain or pleasure which you believe will or may come to affect you. If, on the other hand, you are affected with a sympathetic passion, then it is not the case that your passion has been caused by a pain or pleasure that you experience or that you believe you will or may come to experience. If your passion is a sympathetic passion, then it has been caused by an idea of another person's passion having become transformed into a passion.

Other than this, however, Hume does not seem to believe that there are any essential differences between a sympathetic passion and an ordinary passion. At any rate, he does not say anything to indicate that there are any such differences. Judging from what he does and does not say, it seems as if sympathetic passions are passions in the same sense as ordinary passions, with the same power to motivate a person to action and with the same power to evoke certain other impressions and ideas in the bearer. One of the passages in which this comes out most clearly is perhaps the following:

The sentiments of others can never affect us, but by becoming, in some measure, our own; in which case they operate upon us, by opposing and encreasing our passions, in the very same manner, as if they had been originally deriv'd from our own temper and disposition (T 3.3.2, 593).

Furthermore, if a person, S, has sympathy with another person, O, with respect to an unpleasant passion, then, just as O's original passion is genuinely unpleasant to O, so the sympathetic passion of S can be genuinely unpleasant to S. This, I think, is clear from Hume's claim that if a person, S, comes to experience an unpleasant passion – and only an unpleasant passion – as a result of having sympathized with another person, O, then S will – if she is aware that this is why she is experiencing her passion – perceive O as a cause of her unpleasant passion and, subsequently, come to hate O (T 2.2.9, 385). Now, it does not seem to me as if this would happen unless the sympathetic passion of S was experienced by S as being genuinely unpleasant to her.

In view of this I am inclined to believe that Hume did not think that there are any essential differences between the passion of the sympathizer and the passion

of the object of her sympathy, besides a possible difference in their respective causal histories.²⁰

If we now add to this an observation made by Páll S. Árdal (1989, 25), namely that Hume does not seem to make any distinction between feeling an emotion, i.e., having a certain affective experience, and being in an emotional state, it would seem to lead to the conclusion that the state of emotional sharing that is, or at any rate can be, brought about through the principle of sympathy, is not a state of empathy.

According to Árdal, it seems to be the case that “to be”, e.g., “proud is, for him [Hume], to feel pride” (Árdal 1989, 25). This would mean that if a person is proud, then she feels pride, and, conversely, if a person feels pride, then she is proud. As Árdal notes, the first of these claims is clearly not in accord with our current use of the predicate ‘being proud’. We can say of a person who is sleeping, and who is not at the time feeling pride, that she is proud (in the emotional sense). However, for our purposes it is the latter claim – the claim that if a person feels pride, then she is proud – that is the interesting one. Put more generally this is the claim that a person cannot feel an emotion without at the same time being in the corresponding emotional state. Hence, if one assumes this claim and at the same time defines ‘empathy’ in the way I want to, saying that a person, S, cannot have empathy with respect to another person’s emotion unless S is feeling a similar emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state, then empathy becomes an impossible achievement. If Árdal is correct in his claim that Hume did not make any distinction between feeling an emotion and being in an emotional state – and I believe he is – then the principle of sympathy cannot give rise to empathy (defined in the way mentioned above).

However, in fairness to Hume, it should be noted that it does not seem to have been impossible for him to make a distinction between feeling an emotion and being in an emotional state. Even though he seems to have thought that passions are a certain kind of affective impressions, which are both experienced in a certain way by their bearers and which have the power to affect their will and passions, he could perhaps have claimed that in certain instances these impressions can be strong enough to be perceived or felt by their bearer, but still so weak as not to be able to affect his will or passions. In that case Hume would

²⁰ Just as in the case of Spinoza, it does not seem as if Hume’s system prevents him from saying that a person can sympathize with another person with respect to a passion that is itself the result of a process of sympathy. In fact, Hume actually points to such a case in his discussion of our esteem for the rich (T 2.2.5, 365).

have had a way of distinguishing between feeling an emotion and being in an emotional state.

As a final note on Hume, I wish to say a few words about his views on pity or compassion. According to Hume, “[p]ity is a concern for ... the misery of others, without any friendship ... to occasion this concern” (T2.2.7, 369). This is a view which has both its affinities with and its differences from Spinoza’s view on pity.

The main difference is that whereas for Spinoza pity is a kind of sadness, for Hume it is a kind of concern. According to Hume, pity is not constituted by sadness or pain. Instead, pity is a concern for the misery of another, meaning that it is a particular desire to relieve another person of his pain.

Despite this difference, one of the main similarities between Hume and Spinoza is that both believed that the sharing of another person’s sadness can give rise to pity. According to Spinoza, imitation-sadness can constitute pity, whereas, according to Hume, sympathy with respect to another person’s pain can give rise to the concern which constitutes pity.

However, whereas Spinoza also believed that pity could be brought about through the realization that a loved one is sad, Hume believed that it could not. When Hume claimed that pity is a concern for the misery of another *without any friendship to occasion this concern*, he was, in effect, denying that love for another person or, for that matter, any kind of interest in the happiness of another person, can play an active part in the emergence of pity.

This does not mean, however, that Hume thought that the belief that a loved one is sad cannot give rise to sadness, nor does it mean that he thought that such a belief is incapable of causing a concern for the misery of a loved one. Hume believed that it could, but, for some reason, he did not want to call such a concern ‘pity’. This kind of concern was instead called ‘benevolence’, whereas the term ‘pity’ was reserved for a concern not caused by a prior interest in the happiness of another (T 2.2.6; T 2.2.9, 387).²¹

Another similarity between Spinoza and Hume is their claim that pity is painful or unpleasant for the one feeling pity (T 2.2.9, 381). This claim also creates a problem for them both: If pity entails feeling an unpleasant passion

²¹ There is some confusion concerning the meaning of the term ‘benevolence’. In the section on benevolence and anger, benevolence is described as a desire for another person’s happiness and an aversion towards his pain where this desire and aversion are caused by the idea of the misery or happiness of a friend (T 2.2.6, 367). In a later section, however, benevolence is said to be “an original pleasure arising from the pleasure of the person belov’d, and a pain proceeding from his pain”, but it is also described as a pain and pleasure arising from the pain and pleasure of someone we do not love (T 2.2.9, 387).

caused by an unpleasant passion in someone else, why does not this give rise to hate towards this other person? On both Hume's and Spinoza's accounts, if we perceive someone to be a cause of pain in us, then we will naturally grow to hate this person. However, the former seems to be exactly what happens in some cases of imitation and some cases of sympathy with respect to the sadness of other people, so why do we not grow to hate these people?

Spinoza's answer to this question is that imitation of another person's sadness can never give rise to hate towards this person (E3p27c2). His argument for this claim is that since the imitation of another person's sadness gives rise to pity, it cannot at the same time give rise to hate since hate is incompatible with pity (E3p27c2d). The problem with this answer is that it only goes to show that there is something seriously wrong with Spinoza's theory. It is a fact that, according to his theory, imitation of another person's sadness, in some cases, entails both pity and hate towards this person. If pity then is incompatible with hate, then so much the worse for the theory.

Hume, on the other hand, gives a much more elaborate answer to the question posed above. As we have already seen, he in fact admits that sympathy with respect to another person's pain, in some instances, gives rise to hate towards that person. However, Hume also wants to claim that, despite the pain involved in this kind of sympathy, in some instances it gives rise to pity instead of hate.

Hume's explanation of this is that pity "arises from a great degree of misery, or any degree strongly sympathiz'd with: Hatred or contempt from a small degree, or one weakly sympathiz'd with" (T 2.2.9, 387). Put more fully, pity arises from an extensive or double sympathy (T 2.2.9, 386, 388). By sympathizing both with the other's pain and with the pleasure he will experience upon being released from this pain, there arises in the sympathizer a concern for the misery of the other person, i.e., a desire for his pleasure and an aversion towards his pain (T 2.2.9, 387).

To summarize: 'Sympathy', for Hume, denotes a principle for the transference of passions, beliefs, and inclinations between individuals. Put more simply, 'sympathy' denotes a particular way in which a person may acquire, for example, a passion upon entertaining an idea of a similar passion in someone else. What is peculiar about this way of acquiring passions is that it presupposes neither a prior desire for the other person's happiness nor a prior aversion to his unhappiness. Thus, in order to become affected with sympathetic pain upon perceiving another person in pain, I do not have to care about this person.

In this respect Hume's notion of sympathy, just like Spinoza's notion of imitation of affects, denotes a way of acquiring emotions that is consistent with

the way in which an emotion felt as part of having empathy must be caused. However, just as in the case of Spinoza, this is the only respect in which Hume's account approximates the current notion of empathy as emotional sharing. Sympathy does not necessarily give rise to a state of emotional sharing, and neither does it, at least not necessarily, give rise to an emotion that is significantly different from emotions acquired in the ordinary way. If a person has acquired an emotion, e.g., sadness, through sympathizing with another person, then it may be the case both that this other person is not actually having any emotion at all, and that the sympathizer is genuinely sad.

As we have seen, Spinoza's notion of imitation of affects and Hume's notion of sympathy are very similar to each other. Both denote a process of acquiring, e.g., an emotion through entertaining an idea of a similar emotion in someone else. The peculiar thing about these processes, however, is that they do not presuppose that the imitator or sympathizer has any prior desire for this other person's happiness or any prior aversion towards his misery. Thus, when a person feels, e.g., sad as a result of having imitated or sympathized with another person's sadness, although she does feel sad because she has entertained an idea of a similar sadness in this other person, she does not feel sad because this idea has frustrated any of her wishes.

In the next chapter I will present two philosophers who also claimed that there is a particular way in which the state or situation of a person can give rise to an emotion in another person without the latter's having to have any prior interest in the state or situation of the former. As opposed to Spinoza and Hume, however, these philosophers also seem to have been open to the idea that in this process a person may come to feel an emotion that is similar to someone else's emotion but without necessarily being in the same kind of emotional state.

CHAPTER 3

SMITH AND SCHOPENHAUER

3.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I claimed that one of the main things that spurred Spinoza and Hume to develop their notions of imitation of affects and of sympathy was Hobbes's view that a person will not be affected by another person's emotion unless she has a prior interest in the happiness or misery of this person.

Spinoza and Hume were, however, not the only ones who tried to counter this claim of Hobbes's. In fact, both before and after Hume, there were a number of British philosophers who developed ways of explaining how a person can become affected with, e.g., sadness upon perceiving that another person is sad, without having to presuppose that the former person has a prior interest in the happiness of the latter. Many of these philosophers also spoke about this state or process in terms of 'sympathy', but, compared to Hume, they had a very different way of explaining it. While Hume (and Spinoza) explained it as the result of one person's entertaining an idea of another person's emotion, these other philosophers instead explained it as the result of one person's entertaining an idea about the other's situation. According to them, a person can come to share another person's emotion simply through imagining being in his situation.

Some of the philosophers who made this claim were, as I have already mentioned, Francis Hutcheson, James Arbuckle and Archibald Campbell. In this section, however, I will focus on a somewhat later but doubtlessly more famous exponent of this view, Adam Smith.

Smith is interesting not only because he is the most famous historical defender of this view. A second reason for focusing on Smith is that he at one point explicitly says that the emotions that a person feels as a result of imagining herself to be in a certain situation are of a peculiar kind, which, presumably, is different from the kind of emotions that she feels as a result of believing herself to be in the same kind of situation. Unfortunately, Smith never goes on to say in what way(s) these emotions differ from each other, but, despite this, I think it is reasonable to regard him as one of the first to suggest that it is possible to share

an emotion with someone else, without necessarily being in the same kind of emotional state.

Another philosopher for whom the possibility of having an emotion in this way was even more important was Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer did not write about the sharing of emotions in general, but he had a way of characterizing compassion that is highly interesting in this context. According to Schopenhauer, having compassion for someone is the same thing as feeling his sadness or suffering. However, not any kind of feeling will do. For reasons having to do with Schopenhauer's views on human motivation and the moral worth of different actions, it is vital that having compassion for someone does not entail that you yourself are suffering. Hence, if you feel compassion for someone, then, even though you feel sadness, it cannot be the case that you are sad.

This view of compassion comes very close to the view of empathy as emotional sharing. I believe that the two views come a little too close to each other, but that is not something I will dwell on here. In this section I mainly want to show that it is reasonable to read Schopenhauer as saying that having compassion with another person requires feeling his suffering without being in a state of suffering oneself, and that by saying this Schopenhauer does in fact take one step closer to the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing.

3.2 Adam Smith on Sympathy

Smith's views on sympathy are presented in his first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. This work was first published in 1759 and it appeared in its 6th and final edition in 1790.¹ As Hume reports in a letter to Smith, dated April 12th, 1759, the book instantly became a success (Hume 1969, 303).²

The Theory of Moral Sentiments is a work on both normative and descriptive ethics. In the book, Smith attempts both to describe and explain people's habits of making moral judgments, and also to justify some of these judgments.

Smith's account of sympathy plays its most important role in the descriptive part of the work, and it is on this part that I will focus. In short, Smith's claim is

¹ I will be quoting from D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie's version of the 6th edition (Smith 1790/1984). All references will have the form 'TMS', standing for "The Theory of Moral Sentiments", followed by the number of the part, section, chapter and paragraph referred to. In most cases, I have also added the number of the page in Smith 1790/1984. Thus, 'TMS 1.1.1.2, 9' refers to *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, part one, section one, chapter one, paragraph 2, page 9 (in Smith 1790/1984).

² For more on the work's impact on Smith's contemporaries, see Engell (1981, 149).

that when people approve of certain actions, they do so because they sympathize with the motives of those who perform the actions and/or because they sympathize with the happiness of those who benefit from the actions. Conversely, when people disapprove of certain actions they do so because they cannot sympathize with the motives of those who perform the actions and/or because they sympathize with the ones who are negatively affected by them.³

In this section I will present Smith's notion of sympathy with a view to showing how this notion approximates the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing. To begin with, I argue that Smith used the term 'sympathy' to denote a particular state of feeling an emotion that is similar to the emotion of someone else or that is similar to the emotion that another person would be feeling if certain conditions were met. I then give an account of the ways in which Smith explains the emergence of this kind of state, and, finally, I present his views on the nature of the emotions that a person feels as part of having sympathy with another person. In conclusion I argue (1) that sympathy, on Smith's account, does not entail a state of emotional sharing, (2) that the ways in which sympathy can be brought about are consistent with the ways in which empathy must be brought about, according to the current conception of empathy, and (3) that although Smith does not seem to have been of the opinion that the sympathizer must feel her emotion in a special way, at one point he does suggest that in some circumstances she does in fact do so. Thus, as compared to Hume and Spinoza, Smith can be said to take one step further towards the current conception of empathy.

The closest Smith comes to defining 'sympathy' in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is in the very first section of the first chapter of the first part. There he distinguishes between sympathy on the one hand, and pity or compassion on the other:

Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the

³ When speaking about sympathy Smith uses both the noun 'sympathy' and the verb 'sympathize'. Both the noun and the verb are used in connection with persons and in connection with the mental states of other people. Thus, Smith sometimes says that we sympathize with other people and sometimes that we sympathize with their mental states (see, e.g., TMS 1.1.1.13, 12, and TMS 2.1.2.4 and 5, 70, respectively); and sometimes he speaks of our sympathy with other people and the sympathy that we have or feel with their mental states (see, e.g., TMS 6.2.1.2, 219, and TMS 1.1.1.9, 11, respectively). Although the relation between sympathizing with persons and sympathizing with their mental states is never made clear, I take it that whenever a person sympathizes with someone, she always sympathizes with a particular mental state of this person.

same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever (TMS 1.1.1.5, 10).

By ‘fellow-feeling’ Smith here seems to mean a particular state of feeling a passion that is similar to the passion of someone else (TMS 1.1.1.3, 10). Hence, ‘sympathy’ would seem to denote a kind of emotional sharing, that is, a particular state of feeling an emotion that is similar to an emotion that someone else is actually feeling.

However, as soon becomes clear, this is not the only sense in which Smith uses the term. On some occasions, he also uses ‘sympathy’ to denote a particular state of feeling a passion that someone else could be expected to feel, but that he does not in fact feel. An example of this usage can be found when Smith says that sympathy with a person who has lost his reason may be constituted by a misery at the thought of losing one’s reason, even though the person who is in this state may not even be aware of it. While he may sing and laugh, we may, on account of feeling sadness at the thought of his misfortune, still be said to sympathize with him (TMS 1.1.1.11, 12).⁴

Similarly to Hume, Smith thought that a person can come to sympathize with another person merely through perceiving that this person is affected with a certain emotion:

Grief and joy, for example, strongly expressed in the look and gestures of any one, at once affect the spectator with some degree of a like painful or agreeable emotion. A smiling face is, to every body that sees it, a cheerful object; as a sorrowful countenance, on the other hand, is a melancholy one (TMS 1.1.1.6, 11).

However, as opposed to Hume, Smith did not believe that this holds in the case of all emotions. Quite rightly, I think, he points out that when we perceive the behavior of someone who is very angry, without knowing why he is angry, we do not tend to experience a similar anger ourselves (TMS 1.1.1.7, 11). In such cases we tend rather to distance ourselves from his anger in order not to let ourselves be swept up in it, or, in some cases, we tend to react with fear or disapproval.

In view of observations like this one, Smith claimed that we are more likely to sympathize with the emotions of other people when we know why they are experiencing their emotions, as opposed to when we do not know this. He also

⁴ On some occasions, Smith also seems to use ‘sympathy’ in a third way, meaning a certain kind of process through which a person can come to share someone else’s emotion. This seems to be the case, for example, when he writes that “[t]he spectator enters by sympathy into the sentiments of [the owner of a particular object]” (TMS 4.1.1.2, 179). This usage is, however, so rare that I will disregard it in the following.

claimed that a sympathy that is not accompanied by such knowledge is “always extremely imperfect” (TMS 1.1.1.9, 11).

Another and more important difference between Smith and Hume is that, whereas Hume claimed that a person cannot come to sympathize with another person unless she has an idea of a passion of this person’s, Smith claimed that such an idea is not necessary. According to Smith, sympathy does not in general arise from an idea of another person’s passion, but rather from an idea of the situation in which the other finds himself and which is, or, at least, could be, the cause of a passion in him. It is by imagining being in his situation that we come to feel the way he does or the way he could be expected to feel (TMS 1.1.1).

This claim about the imagination is the central claim of Smith’s theory of sympathy. Unfortunately, Smith never takes the time to specify the claim, but, presumably, what he meant to say was that the way we come to sympathize with other people, i.e., feel the way they do or the way they could be expected to feel, is, in most cases, through imagining being in their situation, and, in particular, through imagining that aspect of their situation which is responsible for their having an emotion, or which would, if they were aware of it, be responsible for their having an emotion.

Turning now to the act of imagining being in the situation of someone else, one must begin by noting – as has been noted before (by, e.g., Mercer 1972, 86) – that Smith describes this act somewhat ambiguously. One way of putting the problem is to say that he tends to use ‘situation’ in two different senses: Sometimes he uses it in an objective or impersonal sense, meaning by ‘situation’ the external situation a person is in and which can be described without reference to this person’s particular perception of the situation; and sometimes he uses it in a subjective or personal sense, meaning by ‘situation’ not only the other person’s objective situation but also this situation as it is perceived by him in the light of his personal history and his current beliefs and desires.

An example of the “objective” use can, I believe, be found in Smith’s claim that we can be said to sympathize with a person who has lost his reason, on account of feeling horror upon imagining being in his situation. Assuming that Smith here means that we will experience horror while still imagining being in this person’s situation, it is evident that he must be using ‘situation’ in the objective sense. This is so, because in the example it is assumed that the person who has lost his reason is neither aware of nor saddened by the nature of his state. Hence, had we imagined being in his subjective situation, i.e., had we imagined being him, with his current beliefs, in his objective situation, then we could not have been saddened by the state either. For us to experience sadness

while imagining being in his situation, we would have to imagine being only in his objective situation; that is, we would have to imagine being in a situation in which we have lost our reason, but not in a situation in which we do not know that we have done so.

An example of the “subjective” use of ‘situation’ can be found towards the end of *The Theory of Moral Sentiment* when Smith tries to argue that sympathetic passions do not depend upon the sympathizer’s own self-interest. Here he makes a point of saying that sympathy is brought about not by imagining being in another person’s objective situation, but rather by imagining being in his subjective situation:

When I condole with you for the loss of your only son, in order to enter into your grief I do not consider what I, a person of such character and profession, should suffer, if I had a son, and if that son was unfortunately to die: but I consider what I should suffer if I was really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters (TMS 7.3.1.4, 317).⁵

The problem with these shifts in the use of the word ‘situation’ is that a person might react with completely different emotions upon, on the one hand, imagining being in another person’s objective situation, and, on the other hand, imagining being in someone’s subjective situation. If you manage to do the latter, that is, if you imagine that you are in another person’s objective situation and, furthermore, that you perceive this situation in the light of his personal history and his current beliefs and desires, then you will react in a way that is closely similar to his. If, however, you only imagine that you are in his objective situation, then, due to the fact that your psychological make-up might be completely different from his, there is no guarantee that your reaction will resemble his in any way.

Suppose, for example, that you are asked to imagine yourself being in the situation of someone who is out hiking in the woods and who has just realized that he is lost. Suppose further that this person is an experienced hiker and that he knows that he has the necessary equipment and skills to deal with a situation like this. He is, in other words, not the least bit worried about his situation. If you then imagine that you are in his subjective situation, i.e., if you imagine being a person with his skills and his know-how being lost in the woods, then

⁵ Admittedly, Smith here speaks about “considering” what one should suffer if one were in a particular situation, not about feeling suffering as a result of imagining being in this situation. Still, since the example is used to prove that sympathy is not a selfish principle, and since his main claim is that sympathy is brought about through the act of imagining being in the situation of another person, it is reasonable to interpret this example as being an example of this kind of imaginative act.

you are likely to react in the same way as he does. If, on the other hand, you are an inexperienced hiker, and you only imagine being in his objective situation (i.e., lost in the woods), then you will presumably not react in the same way as he.

Although the difference between imagining being in another person's objective situation and imagining being in his subjective situation is important for the understanding of Smith's theory about how sympathy is brought about, it is not necessary to take this difference into account when trying to formulate the theory itself. More important in this respect is the claim that sympathy does not require feeling an emotion which is similar to an emotion that another person actually is feeling. A consequence of this claim is that we cannot specify the theory by saying that sympathy is brought about through an act of imagining that aspect of another person's situation which is responsible for his emotion. As the example of our sympathy with the person who has lost his reason shows, we also need to allow for cases where sympathy is brought about through imagining an aspect of another's situation that is not in fact a cause of an emotion in him, but that would, if he were aware of it, be such a cause.

If we now ask how people come to imagine being in the situations of others, it would seem reasonable to assume that the answer to this question depends, at least in part, on whether we are talking about imagining being in their objective situations or about imagining being in their subjective situations. Given that the latter requires imagining his objective situation as seen in the light of his personal history and his current beliefs and desires, it would seem as if this would, at least in some cases, be a more complicated matter than simply imagining being in his objective situation.⁶

Smith does not say much about this issue, but what he says seems, to some extent at least, to confirm this assumption. When he speaks about imagining being in another person's subjective situation he tends to describe this as an act that is performed intentionally and with some effort (see, e.g., TMS 1.1.4.6, 21). Imagining being in another person's objective situation, on the other hand, is never described in so many words, but presumably he saw this as something people do instinctively and immediately upon learning about the situations of others.

⁶ Of course, in many cases the psychological make-ups of people are so similar that they can in fact be said to imagine being in each other's subjective situations the moment they imagine being in each other's objective situations. It is only when people differ in their personal histories and their current beliefs and desires that imagining being in their subjective situations becomes a more complicated task.

Turning now to Smith's views on the nature of the emotions which these acts of imagination give rise to, one can begin by noting that given the difference between imagining being in another person's objective situation and imagining being in his subjective situation one could expect that there would, or at least could, be a difference in the emotions which these acts or processes give rise to. On the whole, it seems reasonable to assume that if a person is having an emotion, and if she knows or believes that she has this emotion simply because she has imagined being in a certain kind of situation, then she will experience this emotion in a different way from when she experiences an emotion and does not know or believe that she does this because of an act imagination. For example, if a person feels fear as a result of having imagined herself standing in a field, being threatened by an angry bull, then she is likely to experience this fear differently, if she knows that this is why she is feeling fear, than if she does not know this. If, in the latter case, she mistakenly believes that she feels this fear as a result of actually standing in the field with the bull in front of her, then she is very likely to experience her fear in a more profound way.

Now, in those cases where it takes some effort to imagine being in the subjective situation of someone else, one would expect that a person would not be as likely to lose sight of the real cause of her emotion, as in those cases where it does not take that large an effort or in those cases where she simply imagines being in the objective situation of someone else. Hence, it would seem reasonable to assume that at least some of the emotions that a person has a result of having imagined herself being in the subjective situation of someone else would be experienced somewhat differently from at least some of the emotions that she has a result of having imagined herself being in the objective situation of another person.

Put more fully, I would say that, in general, if a person feels, e.g., fear because she has imagined herself being in a certain situation, and if she does not believe that she is in this situation, then she will feel fear but she will not be afraid. If, on the other hand, she does believe that she is in this particular situation, and if she also believes that this is the reason why she is feeling fear, then she will, in most cases, be afraid. Thus, for any kind of situation the thought of which has the power to evoke an emotion in a person, if this person imagines being in that kind of situation, then she will in most cases experience her emotion in a way that does not entail being in the corresponding emotional state. If, on the other hand, she believes that she actually is in that kind of situation, then she will in most cases be put in an emotional state.

Since one of the ideas characteristic of the current conception of empathy is that having empathy with another person requires feeling an emotion in a way which does not entail being in the corresponding emotional state, it is, of course, of great interest to see what Smith's position was on this issue. Granted what was said above, it would seem reasonable to expect that he would have regarded at least some of the emotions that are brought about through imagining being in another person's situation as being of a somewhat peculiar kind.

However, the general impression one gets when reading *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is that Smith did not believe that there is anything peculiar about emotions brought about through acts of imagination. Admittedly, there is one place – TMS, 1.1.4.7, 22 – where he says something importantly different, but this is a singular exception. In general, Smith's view seems to have been that although sympathetic emotions in some cases are not as strong and vivid as ordinary emotions, this is just a matter of a difference in degree: Qualitatively speaking, sympathetic emotions are emotions in just the same sense as ordinary emotions.

There are plenty of passages one can point to in support of this claim. In one that may sound reminiscent of Spinoza, Smith claims that as we sympathize with someone's love of a particular thing, we grow to love that thing too (TMS 2.1.2.4, 70). Another passage can be found in his discussion of our habit of congratulating other people. There he claims that congratulations rest upon a sharing of another person's joy about some state or event, and, furthermore, that the joy we feel when we congratulate someone is just as real as his joy:

Whenever we cordially congratulate our friends, which, however, to the disgrace of human nature, we do but seldom, their joy literally becomes our joy: we are, for the moment, as happy as they are: our heart swells and overflows with real pleasure: joy and complacency sparkle from our eyes, and animate every feature of our countenance, and every gesture of our body (TMS 1.3.1.11, 47).

However, as was mentioned above, there is one passage where Smith says something significantly different. This is when he discusses compassion and the sympathetic sadness which people, according to him, feel as part of having compassion for someone. Here he claims that,

[w]hat they feel, will, indeed, always be, in some respects, different from what he feels, and compassion can never be exactly the same with original sorrow; because the secret consciousness that the change of situations, from which the sympathetic sentiment arises, is but imaginary, not only lowers it in degree, but, in some measure, varies it in kind, and gives it a quite different modification (TMS, 1.1.4.7, 22).

Thus, due to the fact that their sadness is caused by an imaginative act and due to the fact that they are always, in some sense, aware of this, their sadness will be of a different kind from the sadness which the other person is feeling. Now, although this is never said explicitly, it is reasonable to assume that this other person is feeling sadness because he believes that he is in an unfortunate situation. Presumably, then, the sadness that he feels is different from the sadness that they feel, because he feels it (or believes that he feels it) because he believes that he is in this situation, whereas they feel their sadness because they are, in some sense, aware of the fact that they feel it because they have only imagined being in his situation.

Unfortunately, Smith never goes on to say what the difference between these emotions consists in. Thus, it remains unclear in what ways a sympathetic emotion could be said to differ from an ordinary or original emotion. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that Smith did in fact notice that there can be a difference between them. Even though he does not say more about it and even though he seems oblivious to the difference later in the text, it is an interesting and important difference between his account and the accounts of Spinoza and Hume. By making this observation Smith takes an important step towards today's notion of empathy, according to which the empathizer has to have or feel her emotion in a way that differs from our ordinary way of having emotions.

Speaking about the nature of the sympathetic passions, one can also note that in those cases where a person acquires an emotion through imagining being in another person's situation (whether in the objective or in the subjective sense), in those cases it would also seem reasonable to assume that her emotion is in some sense directed towards the situation she is imagining. If she is aware of the fact that she is experiencing her emotion only because she has imagined being in the situation, then her emotion could perhaps not be said to be directed towards this situation in the same sense as it would have been had she felt it because she believed that she was in this situation or if she believed that this was why she felt it. Still, it does not seem wrong or unreasonable to say that it was directed towards this situation in some sense. Smith does not say anything explicit about this, but, as is evident from, e.g., his claim that she who sympathizes with someone's love of a certain thing will love that thing too (TMS 2.1.2.4, 70), it is clear that he believed that a person can acquire a directed emotion through imagining being in the situation of someone else.

I will now end this presentation of Smith's theory by giving a short account of his views on pity or compassion. To have or feel compassion for another person is, according to Smith, to sympathize with the sadness or sorrow of this person.

‘Pity’ and ‘compassion’ are defined as “words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others” (TMS, 1.1.1.5, 10). Although this would seem to mean that compassion can be constituted by a sadness that is not directed towards the object of the other person’s sadness, in view of what Smith then goes on to say, it is evident that he thought that in most cases pity is indeed constituted by a sadness that is directed towards this object.

This is clear from the fact that it is in this connection that Smith first puts forth both the claim that sympathy with another person which is not accompanied by a knowledge of the cause of his emotion is “always extremely imperfect”, and the claim that sympathetic emotions are, in most cases, brought about through acts of imagining being in the situations of others (TMS, 1.1.1.9, 11; TMS 1.1.1.10, 12). What leads him to make these claims is the following consideration:

General lamentations, which express nothing but the anguish of the sufferer, create rather a curiosity to inquire into his situation, along with some disposition to sympathize with him, than any actual sympathy that is very sensible. The first question which we ask is, What has befallen you? Till this be answered, though we are uneasy both from the vague idea of his misfortune, and still more from torturing ourselves with conjectures about what it may be, yet our fellow-feeling is not very considerable (TMS, 1.1.1.9, 11f.).

Thus, similarly to Spinoza, Smith saw pity, at least in most cases, as consisting in sadness at the thought of an unfortunate event that has happened to another. However, whereas Spinoza held that this sadness is originally caused by an idea of the other person’s sadness, Smith believed that it is, in most cases, caused by an act of imagining being in the other’s situation, that is, by entertaining an idea of the unfortunate event that has happened to the other.

Another difference between Smith’s and Spinoza’s views on pity is that whereas Spinoza claimed that compassion consists in being in a state of sadness at the thought of another’s misfortune, Smith seems to have been open to another view. As we have already seen, when he describes the sadness that we feel as part of having compassion for another person, he explicitly says that it is a sadness of peculiar character. Due to “the secret consciousness” that you feel this sadness as a result of having imagined being in the situation of someone else, you will experience your sadness in a peculiar way.

This concludes my presentation of Smith’s theories of sympathy and of compassion. I now want to end the section by specifying the ways in which Smith’s notion of sympathy relates to the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing. I will go through the three ideas characteristic of this

conception of empathy, and I will briefly comment upon how – and if – these ideas are met with in Smith's theory.

The first idea is that empathy requires a state of emotional sharing, that is, that two (or more) people have similar emotions. As we have seen, Smith's notion of sympathy does not include this idea. To sympathize with another person is, according to Smith, to feel – under certain circumstances – an emotion which is similar to an emotion that this other person is feeling or that this other person would feel if certain conditions were met. Hence, sympathy, on Smith's account, does not entail sharing the emotion of someone else.

According to the second idea, if a person is to feel an emotion as part of having empathy with another person, then her emotion must have been caused in a special way. While it must have been caused by the other person's state or situation or by her having an idea about this person's state or situation, it cannot have been caused by any of her wishes having become satisfied or frustrated or by her perceiving the possibility that any of her wishes might become satisfied or frustrated.

Now, on Smith's main theory about how sympathetic emotions arise, this condition is met. According to this theory, sympathetic emotions arise as a result of an act of imagining oneself being in the situation of another person. Hence, these emotions are dependent upon an idea of another person's situation. However, since the emotions result from *imagining* being in a certain situation, and not from *believing* that one is in this situation, it is reasonable to assume that they do not depend upon any actual or anticipated satisfaction or frustration of one's wishes. Even if one has a wish to be or not to be in a certain situation, imagining being in that situation cannot satisfy or frustrate that wish. As long as this act of imagination does not give rise to a belief that it is possible that one might actually end up in this situation, neither can it give rise to any anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration.

In relation to this, one may also note something that I have not previously mentioned, namely that Smith held that affection and concern for another person are not necessary prerequisites for sympathy. As is clear from his claim that sympathy can be what in the first place causes one to be concerned for another person (TMS 6.2.1.7, 220), one does not have to care for him or have a desire for his happiness in order to be able to sympathize with him.

Finally, there is the third idea characteristic of the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing: the idea that empathy requires that the empathizer experiences her emotion in a special way, i.e., that if she feels, for example, anger as part of having empathy with someone who is angry, then she

must feel this anger in such a way that she herself is not angry. As we have seen, there is in Smith at least one passage which points in the direction of this idea. Thus, whereas Spinoza and Hume seem to have held that the only essential difference between ordinary emotions and the emotions that a person feels as a result of having imitated or sympathized with the emotions of another person is a difference in the causal history of the emotions, Smith claims, in at least one place, that the sympathetic emotions can also be different in another sense. Although he does not say anything about what this difference consists in, given his theory about how sympathetic emotions in general are brought about, it seems reasonable to assume that he saw at least some sympathetic emotions as being, in a sense, less real than ordinary emotions. While Hume and Spinoza seem to have been of the opinion that if you imitate or sympathize with the anger of someone who is angry, then you become angry in just the same sense as he, Smith seems to have been open to the possibility that you may sympathize with this person's anger without having to become angry yourself. With this suggestion Smith can be seen to take a step in the direction of the notion of empathy that is the topic of this dissertation. Another philosopher, who took an even more decisive step towards this notion, was Arthur Schopenhauer. It is to him I now turn.

3.3 Schopenhauer on Compassion

In Schopenhauer we find a theory of compassion ('Mitleid') that says that compassion is identical to a state of feeling another person's suffering. This view comes very close to the views of Spinoza and Smith, but, as we soon shall see, there is one point at which Schopenhauer's account of compassion differs significantly from theirs. While they did not see, or, as in the case of Smith, did not see the need to stress, that having compassion for another person does not entail being in a state of sadness or suffering, this point becomes highly important for Schopenhauer. Due to his views on human motivation, and his claim that compassion is the only thing that can drive a person to actions of moral worth, Schopenhauer had to claim that having compassion for someone does not entail that one suffers oneself. Hence, although compassion, on his account, consists in a state of feeling another person's suffering, it has to be a particular kind of feeling which does not entail a real suffering on the part of the person having compassion. In this respect, Schopenhauer comes very close to identifying compassion not only with a kind of emotional sharing but, more specifically, with a kind of empathy.

Unfortunately Schopenhauer does not make much of an attempt to describe this particular state of feeling another person's suffering. Even so I think it is clear that his account of compassion is an advance compared to the accounts of Spinoza and Smith. First of all, I believe that Schopenhauer is correct in his claim that having compassion for another person does not entail being in a state of suffering. Secondly and more importantly, I think that he did something interesting and important when he combined this claim with the claim that compassion is identical to a state of feeling another person's suffering. By doing so, he gave the question of whether it is possible to share another person's suffering without suffering oneself a significance that it did not have before. It is with Schopenhauer that this question emerges, and it is in Schopenhauer's thinking that something resembling today's notion of empathy first becomes important.

In this section I will begin by giving a short presentation of Schopenhauer's account of compassion. I will focus on arguing for the claim that compassion, according to him, is a state of feeling the suffering of another person without being in a state of suffering oneself. After having presented my arguments for this claim, I will make some comments on Schopenhauer's attempt to explain compassion so described. Finally, I will compare Schopenhauer's notion of compassion with the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing. Here I claim that although his notion of compassion does not imply that the compassionate person shares the emotion of someone else, it does imply that her emotion is caused in a special way and that it is also had or felt in a special way. Both these ways are, I believe, consistent with the ways in which an emotion felt as part of having empathy with someone must be caused and felt.

The notion of compassion occurs in two places in Schopenhauer's thinking. On the one hand, in the "theory of salvation" which is presented in *The World as Will and Representation* (1818/1966, henceforth referred to as WWR), and, on the other hand, in the moral theory, which is developed in *On the Basis of Morality* (1860/1995, hereafter referred to as OBM). The most elaborate account of compassion can be found in the latter book, and it is on this work that I will focus.

On the Basis of Morality contains three main passages in which compassion is described (OBM, 144f., 147 and 165f.). In the first of these, compassion is said to be "the immediate participation, independently of all ulterior considerations, primarily in the suffering of another, and thus in the prevention or elimination of it" (OBM, 144). In the other two passages Schopenhauer speaks less about compassion and more about the person who is feeling compassion. Here he says

that when a person is feeling compassion for another, then she feels ('fühlen') his suffering in him or in his person (OBM, 147 and 165).

A problem with the last two passages, however, is that they also contain statements that contradict each other. In the one it is, e.g., said that if a person feels compassion for another, then it is not the case that she suffers or that she believes herself to be suffering (OB, 147). In the other passage, however, it is claimed that in compassion the difference between suffering and seeing suffering is dissolved (OBM, 165), something which would seem to entail that if a person has compassion for another, then she is in fact suffering.

This is a contradiction, but it can, I believe, be disregarded. Looked at more closely, it is clear that the basic assumptions upon which Schopenhauer's theory is built together imply that if a person has compassion with another, then it is not the case that she is suffering.

There are two assumptions which are particularly important in this respect. The first is a claim that I have already mentioned, namely that if a person has or feels compassion for another person, then she feels the suffering of this other person. The second is a claim that can be described as the main thesis of *On the Basis of Morality*: the claim that it is only compassion which can motivate a person to actions of moral worth.

Unfortunately, Schopenhauer wavers somewhat on the issue concerning exactly what it takes for an action to be of moral worth. The question is discussed in §15. There he shifts from, on the one hand, saying that it is only actions that aim exclusively towards the happiness of other persons that have moral value, to, on the other hand, saying that also actions that aim towards the happiness of both others and the one performing the action can have such value. When, however, he summarizes his position in §16, he concludes that if an action is egoistic, i.e., aiming towards the happiness of the one performing the action, then the action is without moral worth (OBM, 141). Hence, it would seem as if his basic view was that an action is morally valuable if and only if it is performed exclusively for the sake of another person's happiness.

According to Schopenhauer, happiness consists in nothing but the absence of pain and unhappiness (WWR, §58; OBM, 146). Consequently, he claims that the only actions that can have moral worth are those that aim towards the relief or the prevention of other people's pains (OBM, 144). Actions performed for the purpose of relieving and preventing one's own pain are egoistic, and can, on that account, not be of moral worth.

Egoistic actions are, furthermore, always caused by the pain of the person performing the action (OBM, 304). Such pain arises from the subject's belief

that something goes or runs the risk of going against her will. If she believes that her will has been frustrated or is in danger of being frustrated, then she will suffer, and this will motivate her to take steps to relieve her suffering. Although this is never said explicitly, it now appears as if Schopenhauer also makes the crucial assumption that whenever the suffering of a person motivates her to act, then she always acts for the purpose of removing that same suffering.

Given this latter assumption it follows that if an action is to have moral worth, then it cannot be caused by the suffering of the person performing the action. If every action which is motivated by a suffering always aims towards the relief of that suffering, and if there is no moral worth in an action that aims towards the relief of the suffering of the person performing the action, then it follows that an action of moral worth can never be caused by a suffering of the person performing the action.

From this it also follows that a person can never be motivated to perform an action of moral worth through first having a desire to see another person happy and then noticing that this person is not happy. If she has a desire for another person's well-being, and if she then perceives that this person is not happy, this will result in a frustration of her will, which in turn will cause her to suffer. Given what was said above, it then follows that every action which this suffering motivates her to perform, will ultimately aim towards the relief of this same suffering. Hence, if a person is motivated to act from desiring another person's happiness and perceiving that he is not happy, then her action will aim towards her own happiness and, therefore, be without moral worth.

But if this is the case one may well ask oneself how actions of moral worth are possible. How can I be motivated to perform an action which aims towards the removal of another man's suffering, if this is not allowed to happen through the frustration of my will? Schopenhauer says the following:

Obviously only through that other man's becoming *the ultimate object* of my will in the same way as I myself otherwise am, and hence through my directly desiring *his* weal and not *his* woe just as immediately as I ordinarily do only *my own*. But this necessarily presupposes that, in the case of his *woe* as such, I suffer directly with him, I feel *his* woe just as I ordinarily feel only my own [*sein* Wehe fühle wie sonst nur meines]; and, likewise, I directly desire his weal in the same way I otherwise desire only my own (OBM, 143).

What this means is, I believe, the following. If my action is to aim exclusively towards the removal of your pain, then I have to directly desire the removal of your pain. This I cannot do if I am indirectly motivated by your pain, i.e., if your pain motivates me to action through first giving rise to a pain in me. Instead, it has to be the case that I am motivated by your pain in the same way as my own

pain normally motivates me; I have to be directly motivated by your pain and by your pain alone. What this requires, however, is that I feel your pain in the same direct way that I normally feel my own.

To feel another person's pain as if it were one's own may sound as a strange and incredible phenomenon. According to Schopenhauer, it is not:

It is the everyday phenomenon of *compassion*, of the immediate *participation*, independently of all ulterior considerations, primarily in the *suffering* of another, and thus in the prevention or elimination of it; for all satisfaction and all well-being and happiness consist in this. It is simply and solely this compassion that is the real basis of all *voluntary* justice and *genuine* loving-kindness. Only insofar as an action has sprung from compassion does it have moral value, and every action resulting from any other motives has none. As soon as this compassion is aroused, the weal and woe of another are nearest to my heart in exactly the same way, although not always in the same degree, as otherwise my own are (OBM, 144).

To feel compassion for another person is then, according to Schopenhauer, to feel his suffering. As the previous discussion has shown, this is what compassion has to be if it is to be able to motivate a person to action. However, as the previous discussion also has shown, if compassion is to be able to motivate a person to actions of moral worth, it also has to be the case that having compassion for someone does not entail a suffering on one's own part. Consequently, to feel compassion for another person must, according to Schopenhauer, be to feel the suffering of this person, but to feel it in such a way that one does not suffer oneself.⁷

This is also, I believe, the point that Schopenhauer wants to make when he claims that the suffering which we feel in compassion is not ours (OBM, 165), and when he contrasts his view of compassion with the view of Cassina:

His [i.e., Cassina's] view is that compassion arises from an instantaneous deception of the imagination, since we put ourselves in the position of the sufferer, and have the idea that we are suffering *his* pains in our person. This is by no means the case; on the contrary, at every moment we remain clearly conscious that *he* is the sufferer, not *we*; and it is precisely in *his* person, not in ours, that we feel the suffering, to our grief and sorrow. We suffer *with* him and hence *in* him; we feel his pain as *his*, and do not imagine that it is ours (OBM, 147).

Hence, despite the conflicting statements which I mentioned in the beginning of this section I believe it is reasonable to read Schopenhauer as saying that compassion does not entail a real suffering on the part of the person having

⁷ John E. Atwell reaches the same conclusion in his *Schopenhauer: The Human Character* (1990, 100). The same point has also been made by C. Taylor (1999).

compassion. This is what compassion has to entail if it is to be able to motivate a person to actions of moral worth.

Assuming, then, that compassion according to Schopenhauer is a state of feeling another person's suffering without suffering oneself, one might well ask how this is possible. What does it mean to feel another person's suffering, and how is it possible to do this without suffering oneself?

Unfortunately, Schopenhauer does not say much in answer to either of these questions. As for the first question – what does it mean to feel another person's suffering? – the received view seems to be that he meant that we feel not merely a suffering that is qualitatively similar to the suffering of someone else, but rather that we feel a suffering that is numerically identical to his suffering, i.e., that we literally feel his instance of suffering (for expressions of this view, see Cartwright 1999, 278, and Snow 2000, 66f.). What makes this possible is, according to this interpretation, Schopenhauer's claim that different people are just different manifestations of the same basic will. People may appear separate and distinct, but this is simply a matter of appearance. In reality there are no distinctions among different people, and this is supposedly what makes it possible for one person to experience the same instance of suffering that another person is feeling (ibid.).

I do not wish to claim that this interpretation is mistaken, but I want to point out that there are circumstances that make it problematic. To begin with, it should be noted that *On the Basis of Morality* does not contain any conclusive evidence that this actually was Schopenhauer's view. The book does not contain one single passage where Schopenhauer explicitly makes this claim, and although there are passages where he says that compassion can only be explained metaphysically, what he does when he gives this explanation is to justify the phenomenon rather than to explain it. Earlier he had claimed that a person can only feel compassion for another person if she identifies with him and recognizes something of herself in him (OBM, 144, 166). What he does in the "explanation" is to use his metaphysics as a basis for claiming that the person who identifies with other people expresses a correct view of the relationship between herself and others (OBM, 209).

A second problem with this interpretation is that it is difficult to square with some of the things which Schopenhauer actually says about compassion. In particular, it is incompatible with his claim that compassion can motivate a person to refrain from causing another person harm (OBM, 149). Assuming that 'compassion', here as elsewhere, denotes a state of feeling another person's suffering, it is clear that the suffering, in this case, cannot be one which the other

is actually feeling. When compassion motivates a person to abstain from causing another person suffering it is the feeling of his future suffering that is the motivating force, not a suffering that he is currently feeling. Hence, compassion does not presuppose that the other is actually feeling any suffering and, therefore, compassion cannot consist in feeling another person's instance of suffering.⁸

More important for our purposes is the fact that although this interpretation may be able to explain how one person can come to feel another person's instance of suffering, it cannot explain how she can do this without suffering herself. If my being identical with you explains why I am able to feel your instance of suffering, then the suffering which I am feeling is not only yours but also mine. Not only does this fail to explain how I can feel your suffering without suffering myself, given what was said earlier, it also means that whatever action compassion motivates me to perform will be an action that aims towards the relief of my own suffering. Hence, on this interpretation, compassion cannot motivate me to perform actions of moral worth.

In view of this it might seem more reasonable to interpret Schopenhauer as saying that compassion entails feeling another person's type of suffering, but not necessarily his instance of suffering. The problem with this alternative, however, is that it is unclear both whether this actually was Schopenhauer's view, and, if it was, how it should be explicated. Schopenhauer simply does not say enough to make it possible even to begin considering what the answers to these questions might be.

In conclusion, then, I believe we must admit that Schopenhauer does not give a satisfactory answer to the question of how it is possible to feel another person's suffering without suffering oneself. Although it is clear that his account of compassion entails that this is what it is to feel compassion for another person, he neither explains what it means to feel another person's suffering nor how it is possible to do this without suffering oneself.

However, despite this shortcoming, I still believe it is fair to say that Schopenhauer's account of compassion is an important step towards the current notion of empathy as emotional sharing. Even though he does not answer the question how a person can feel another person's suffering without suffering herself, in his theory the question nevertheless takes on an importance that it did not have before.

⁸ This problem has also been noted by David E. Cartwright. However, as opposed to me, Cartwright does not see it as a problem for the literal interpretation of Schopenhauer. He rather sees it as a problem for Schopenhauer's theory (Cartwright 1982, 67).

To conclude this section I now want to point out how Schopenhauer's notion of compassion can be said to approximate the notion of empathy as emotional sharing. Starting with the differences, we may first of all notice that whereas it is perfectly possible to have empathy with other people with respect to both their positive and their negative emotions, you can only have compassion for someone with respect to his negative emotions. That this was Schopenhauer's view of compassion is perhaps too obvious to mention, but it should be pointed out that he also was of the opinion that it is not possible to feel another person's happiness. Given his view of happiness as consisting in nothing but the absence of pain and suffering, it seems as if he saw himself forced to make this assumption (OBM, 145f.).

A second difference between compassion in Schopenhauer's sense and empathy in the current sense is that whereas you cannot have empathy with another person unless you both are experiencing similar emotions, according to Schopenhauer you can have compassion for another person even if he is not at the moment experiencing any emotion at all. Thus, if the first difference shows that empathy does not entail compassion, this difference makes clear that the reverse does not hold either; having compassion for another person in Schopenhauer's sense does not entail having empathy for him.

This, of course, means that Schopenhauer's notion of compassion does not encompass the first idea characteristic of the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing, i.e., the idea that having empathy with someone with respect to a certain emotion requires that you share an emotion with him. As for the other two ideas characteristic of this conception of empathy, however, it is clear that Schopenhauer's account encompasses them both.

Starting with the second idea, it seems reasonable to assume that if one takes seriously Schopenhauer's claim that compassion consists in a state of feeling *another person's* suffering, then whatever suffering the compassionate person is feeling, she is feeling it because this other person is suffering or because she has an idea of a suffering of this person. Furthermore, it also seems reasonable to assume that she does not feel this suffering because any of her wishes has become frustrated or because she perceives the possibility that any of her wishes has been or may come to be frustrated – if this were not so, then it would seem more reasonable to describe the suffering she feels as her own suffering rather than that of another person. Hence, it would seem as if having compassion for another person, on Schopenhauer's account, entails feeling a suffering that has been caused in a way that is consistent with the way in which emotions that are felt as part of having empathy must be caused.

However, it is with respect to the third idea that Schopenhauer makes his most clear and interesting advancement towards the current conception of empathy. The third idea is the idea that if you feel an emotion as part of having empathy with someone else, then you must feel this emotion in a way that does not entail that you are in an emotional state. By claiming that having compassion for another person requires feeling sadness or suffering without being sad or suffering, Schopenhauer gives a clear expression to this idea.

It is by encompassing this idea that Schopenhauer's notion of compassion becomes interesting in connection with the current notion of empathy as emotional sharing. However, as a final note, it should probably be pointed out that since this feature of Schopenhauer's theory has passed unnoticed by many commentators, it is not likely that it has played any significant role in the development of the current conception of empathy. Nietzsche, for example, did not see it, as is evident from his claim that compassion, even on Schopenhauer's account, only "increases the amount of suffering in the world" (Nietzsche 1881/1997, 85).⁹ And neither does Scheler seem to have noticed it. In fact, the first one who pointed to this feature of Schopenhauer's theory seems to have been John E. Atwell (1990).

The purpose of this chapter has been to present Smith's account of sympathy and Schopenhauer's account of compassion, with a special view of showing how these accounts approximate the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing. My claim has been that they do this, not only by including the idea that emotions felt as part of having sympathy or compassion are caused in special ways, but also by containing the idea that these emotions can be – or, as in the case of Schopenhauer, must be – had or experienced in a special way.

By giving voice to this latter idea Smith and Schopenhauer differ from Spinoza and Hume, and in so doing they also take one step further towards the current conception of empathy. However, neither Smith nor Schopenhauer

⁹ Nietzsche did, however, notice the fact that we sometimes imitate other people's feelings: "*Empathy* [*Mitempfindung*] – To understand another person, that is, *to imitate his feelings in ourselves*, we do indeed often go back to the *reason* for his feeling thus or thus and ask for example: *why* is he troubled? – so as then for the same reason become troubled ourselves; but it is much more usual to omit to do this and instead to produce the feeling in ourselves after the *effects* it exerts and displays on the other person by imitating with our own body the expressions of his eyes, his voice, his walk, his bearing (or even their reflection in word, picture, music). Then a similar feeling arises in us in consequence of an ancient association between movement and sensation, which has been trained to move backwards and forwards in either direction." (Nietzsche 1881/1997, 89)

seems to take much interest in further developing this idea, and one searches in vain for any attempts at describing the ways in which this special way of having an emotion differs from our ordinary way of having them. Such descriptions can, however, be found in the philosophers to whom I now turn, Edith Stein and Max Scheler.

CHAPTER 4

EINFÜHLUNG AND EMPATHY

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I argued that with Smith's account of sympathy and Schopenhauer's account of compassion we are taken one step closer to the current conception of empathy. My main claim was that, as opposed to Spinoza and Hume, Smith and Schopenhauer do not merely describe ways of acquiring emotions that are consistent with the ways in which emotions felt as part of having empathy are acquired. By pointing to the possibility that a person can share another person's emotion without being in the same kind of emotional state, they also point to the possibility of states of genuine empathy.

In this chapter I want to present what could be said to constitute the next stage in the development of the conception of empathy as emotional sharing: The discussions concerning *Einfühlung* which took place in Germany at the turn of the 19th century, and, in particular, the accounts of empathy provided by the phenomenologists Edith Stein and Max Scheler.

Although the main part of this chapter will be devoted to Stein and Scheler, I begin, in section 4.2, with a brief overview of what was written about *Einfühlung* by some of their predecessors and contemporaries. The purpose of this overview is to provide a background for the rest of the chapter, and to give some idea of the rather large interest which the phenomena of empathy and emotional sharing aroused in Germany at the turn of the 19th century.

In sections 4.3 and 4.4 I present the views of Stein and Scheler. I will focus on Stein's *Zum Problem der Einfühlung* (1917) and Scheler's *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (1973).¹ I begin by presenting Stein's work, which is almost exclusively focused on *Einfühlung*, and I then move on to show how Scheler situated this phenomenon – which he called 'das Nachfühlen' – in relation to a number of similar phenomena. In this section, I focus particularly

¹ The first edition of *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* was published in 1913 (under the title *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühl und vom Liebe und Hass*). Scheler later published a number of revised editions in which he made some references to Stein's work.

on presenting Scheler's views on the differences among empathy, fellow-feeling, and emotional contagion.

The sections on Stein and Scheler are intended to show how their accounts of *Einfühlung* and *Nachfühlen* relate to the current conception of empathy. In particular, I want to show that there is in both writers a clear expression of the third idea common among philosophers today, that is, the idea that having empathy with someone with respect to a certain emotion requires feeling a similar emotion, but feeling it in a way that does not entail being in the corresponding emotional state.

As for the other two ideas, matters are a bit more complicated. While both Stein and Scheler mainly describe cases in which a person has empathy with someone who does in fact experience an emotion, on Stein's account it is clear that you can "feel yourself into", or, rather, "feel an emotion onto", someone who is not in fact experiencing any emotion at the moment. On Scheler's account this is left somewhat unclear, but presumably he would have agreed with Stein. Consequently, although *Einfühlung* and *Nachfühlen* often involve sharing the emotion of someone else, strictly speaking they do not require it.

As for the second idea, that empathetic emotions are caused in a particular way, I believe that the accounts given by Stein and Scheler are in accord with it. Given how very little they say about how the emotion that a person feels as part of *Einfühlung* or *Nachfühlen* is or can be caused, I have found it impossible to say with any certainty whether or not they actually subscribed to this idea. On the other hand, given their ways of describing both these emotions and the circumstances under which they are experienced, I do not find it unreasonable to assume that they did in fact do so.

Thus, even though the accounts given by Stein and Scheler do not, strictly speaking, entail all three of the ideas characteristic of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing, in the process of describing *Einfühlung* and *Nachfühlen*, Stein and Scheler did in fact come to describe a particular kind of state in which a person (1) feels an emotion that is similar to the emotion that another person is feeling, (2) feels this emotion because the other person is having a similar emotion, but not because any of her wishes has become satisfied or frustrated or because she perceives the possibility that any of her wishes might become satisfied or frustrated, and in which she, furthermore, (3) feels this emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state.

Before turning to the actual presentations, there are two further things that should be pointed out concerning the accounts of Stein and Scheler. The first is that, contrary to what seems to have been the case with Smith and

Schopenhauer, Stein and Scheler did not simply happen to describe states of emotional sharing in which a person feels an emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state. On the contrary, they described these states with a clear view to the difference between them and those states in which a person is in an emotional state as part of sharing someone else's emotion. Thus, when Stein and Scheler describe empathy they do it with the intention of distinguishing it from other similar phenomena.

The second thing I wish to point out concerns the context and the problem in relation to which Stein and Scheler gave their descriptions. As was mentioned above, these descriptions were given as parts of an attempt to describe our ways of perceiving and understanding the mental states of other people. In this, Stein and Scheler differ significantly from Spinoza, Hume and Schopenhauer, who all sought to explain how a person can, upon perceiving the distress of another person, become motivated to act. Thus, while the latter developed their theories mainly to solve a problem concerning human motivation, the former developed theirs exclusively with an eye to addressing an epistemological issue. Consequently, while it became absolutely vital for the latter to describe states and processes in which a person becomes affected with an emotion that has the power to motivate her to action, the former had no such restraints. This, I believe, was of considerable importance for the emergence of the notion of empathy as a state in which a person feels an emotion that is similar to someone else's, but without actually being in the same kind of emotional state.

4.2 Einfühlung in German Philosophy and Psychology

The period around the turn of the 19th century seems to have been something of a goldenage for the notion of *Einfühlung* within German philosophy and psychology. During this period a number of different writers employed the notion, both in relation to questions concerning understanding and interpretation, and in relation to questions concerning our experiences of art and the mental states of other people.

Although it is not always so easy to determine what these writers meant by 'Einfühlung', a general idea can be gained from the term itself. While the noun 'Einfühlung' seems to have been introduced by Robert Vischer in an essay from 1873, the verb 'sich einfühlen' was used already by Herder in the 18th century (Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994, 21, 70f., n. 57). 'Sich einfühlen' can be translated as 'feeling oneself into', and this seems to have been the meaning in which 'Einfühlung' was mainly used. Admittedly, some writers also seem to have used the term to denote a *state* of feeling oneself inside someone or

something, but in most cases ‘Einfühlung’ denoted the *process* of feeling oneself into a person or object of some kind.

In this section I give a brief account of some of the thinkers who wrote about *Einfühlung*. As already mentioned, the notion was employed primarily in relation to three different subject matters: (1) hermeneutics or, more generally, matters concerning the interpretation and understanding of texts and of other persons and cultures, (2) aesthetic experiences, and (3) our knowledge and experience of the mental states of other persons. In what follows I will consider each of these subject matters in turn. Although the following presentation is short and selective, I hope that it will be able to provide some idea of the uses to which the notion of *Einfühlung* was put.

(1) The first explicit appearance of the notion of *Einfühlung* seems to have been in the context of a discussion concerning the ways in which we come to understand other people and cultures. This was, at any rate, the context in which Herder used the expression ‘sich einfühlen’. For him ‘einfühlen’ seems to have denoted a process essential for the interpretation and understanding of foreign texts and cultures. In order to understand a person of a foreign culture, Herder seems to have believed, the interpreter has to “feel his way into” (sich einfühlen) this person (Herder 1774/2002, 292). According to Michael Forster, this did not necessarily involve feeling what this other person felt, but it did require “an imaginative reproduction of his perceptual and affective sensations” (Forster 2002, xvii).

A similar idea can be found in some of the representatives of German hermeneutical thinking. Early in the 19th century, one of the forefathers of hermeneutics, Friedrich Ast, argued that the process of understanding a historical text involves a reproduction (*Nachbildung*) of the creative process behind the text (Palmer 1969, 79f.). A few years later, Friedrich Schleiermacher claimed that one particular type of understanding presupposes the re-experiencing of what the author of the text experienced. This type of understanding – the psychological understanding – was based on what Schleiermacher called the divinatory method, which consisted in the transformation of oneself into the other person (Schleiermacher 1995, 169; Palmer 1969, 88f.).

Neither Ast nor Schleiermacher used the term ‘Einfühlung’ to denote the act of reproducing another person’s experience. Another representative of hermeneutics who did use the term, however, was Wilhelm Dilthey. In one of his later essays, “The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Expressions of Life” (1911/1977), Dilthey described understanding as an act in which a person

grasps the inner life of another person by means of an inference from a knowledge of this person's outer expressions of life (*Lebensäußerungen*). Understanding was divided into two kinds: on the one hand, elementary understanding or understanding of particular expressions of life, and, on the other hand, higher forms of understanding in which a person seeks to understand another person and his whole life context. This latter kind of understanding required, according to Dilthey, a projecting of oneself into this other person (*Sichhineinversetzen*) and a re-experiencing (*Nacherleben*) of his experience (Dilthey 1911/1977, 132).

Similarly to Smith, Dilthey also claimed that in order for this re-experiencing to be of another person's experience, it is sometimes necessary to make certain adjustments in one's own outlook on life. According to Dilthey, every lively representation of an external situation engenders in us a re-experiencing of this situation. However, if this is to be a re-experiencing of another person's experience of this situation, we sometimes have to use our imagination 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" (Dilthey 1911/1977, 133). By doing so, Dilthey apparently believed, we can come to "re-create (*nachzubilden*) any alien psychic life" (*ibid.*).

For Dilthey, the effects of the act of re-experiencing were more interesting than the act itself. He did not attempt to explain it, nor did he try to analyze it in terms of other states or processes. When making this clear, he does, however, make reference to the notions of *Mitfühlen* and *Einfühlung*, indicating that these are notions which would be of interest in a further analysis (*ibid.*). Regardless of this, however, it seems clear that the act of re-experiencing another person's reaction towards a particular situation may well result in something similar to a state of empathy.²

(2) The second area within which the notion of *Einfühlung* was employed was aesthetics. This was the context in which the term '*Einfühlung*' itself was introduced, and this was presumably the area within which the notion became the most popular.

Although the term '*Einfühlung*' was not introduced until 1873, the idea that our feeling ourselves into a work of art is, in some way, important for our experience and appreciation of this work was not new. A precursor to this idea could be found in, e.g., Wundt's claim that the pleasures we find in certain

² For more on Dilthey's notions of understanding and re-experiencing, see Makkreel (1992). For a comparison between Dilthey's views on re-experiencing and the theories of simulation which has been developed in contemporary philosophy, see Makkreel (2000).

forms and shapes are due to the comfort with which we trace these forms and shapes with our eyes; and more elaborate versions, which included the idea of a projection of our emotions upon inanimate objects, had been put forth by Robert Vischer's father, F. T. Vischer, and in his contemporary Hermann Lotze (Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994, 19f.).³

However, when Robert Vischer introduced the term he seems to have used it to denote an act or process in which a person projects not only her emotions but her entire personality upon an object, and in which she also, in some sense, merges with this object (*ibid.*, 25). In this way, he seems to have believed, we come to imbue objects that otherwise would not concern us with both meaning and importance (Vischer 1873/1994, 104f.).

Vischer's rather dense and mysterious account of *Einfühlung* was later popularized by Johannes Volkelt, and it was presumably in this form that it reached Heinrich Wölfflin (Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994, 28). Wölfflin was a student of, among others, Volkelt and Dilthey, who in 1886 put forth a doctoral dissertation on "the psychology of architecture". In it, Wölfflin argued that certain forms and proportions of architecture are expressive of certain emotions, and that we, upon perceiving them, have a tendency to evoke these emotions in ourselves by imitating the forms and proportions and by associating them with certain ideas. We then tend to project these emotions back onto the buildings with the result that they appear imbued with emotions. Thus, Wölfflin claimed, for example, that Gothic proportions appear oppressive, due to the fact that "we immediately associate them with the idea of tightness, which makes it impossible for us to continue to breathe deeply with the necessary lateral expansion" (Wölfflin 1886/1994, 169).

The idea that imitation of postures and behavior plays a vital role for the emergence of *Einfühlung* was also expressed by Theodor Lipps. Lipps was a philosopher and psychologist who used the notion of *Einfühlung* both in explaining our experiences of inanimate objects, such as works of art, and in explaining our experience and knowledge of other people's mental states. Lipps's works came to be widely read, and his theories came to play a significant part in the further development of the notion of empathy. According to Mallgrave and Ikonomou, "[i]t was Lipps, in particular, who fathered a 'scientific' psychological theory of empathy" (1994, 29), and it was also his use of '*Einfühlung*' which inspired Vernon Lee and E. B. Titchener to coin the word 'empathy' (Fontius 2001, 132; Wispé 1987, 20).

³ It should also be noted that similar ideas were expressed by British critics already in the 18th century (see Engell 1981, 151).

Lipps began by applying the notion of *Einfühlung* to explain certain optical illusions. He soon went on, however, to use it also in explaining the pleasure we take in works of art. According to this latter theory, what happens when a person finds pleasure in such a work is that she feels her own strivings and emotions in it. This occurs through a process in which she unintentionally imitates the strivings and emotions expressed in the artwork and, in some cases, the movements or postures depicted in it, and then feels herself into the art-work, projecting her feelings and emotions upon it (Lipps 1903a, 188f.). The object of her aesthetic pleasure is then described by Lipps as a pleasure in both the artwork and herself as she feels herself inside it (*ibid.*, 187f.).

By ‘*Einfühlung*’ Lipps now says that he means the state of being one with the artwork: “It is the fact that the opposition between me and the object disappears, or, rather, no longer obtains” (*ibid.* 188, my transl.).⁴ It should be pointed out, however, that in other places he seems to use the term to denote the state of feeling oneself inside an artwork (see, e.g., *ibid.*, 191), and in others he uses the verb ‘*sich einfühlen*’, suggesting that *Einfühlung* is a kind of act or process through which either of these states is brought about (see, e.g., Lipps 1903b, 122).

(3) Aside from using the notion of *Einfühlung* in relation to questions concerning aesthetic experiences, Lipps also used it in relation to questions concerning our experience and knowledge of the minds of other people. The central claim here was that people have a natural instinct to imitate the strivings and feelings that are expressed in the behavior of other people. When we perceive another person laughing, we feel an impulse to laugh, and when we perceive another person yawn, we acquire an impulse to yawn ourselves. In association with these impulses we also experience something of the feelings that lie behind the expressions of the other, and therefore, Lipps claimed, when we perceive, e.g., another person laugh, then we naturally come to feel the mirth expressed in this laughter (Lipps 1903b, 106f., 114f.).

In this way we come to experience something of the feeling that is expressed in the behavior of the other person, but not only that. In addition to this Lipps claimed that in those cases where we perform the imitation unintentionally, we also tend to experience our feelings in the other person. That is, if we acquire an impulse to laugh upon perceiving another person laugh, and if we, in this process, continue to concentrate on this other person, then we will feel ourselves mirthful in him. This, Lipps now says, is what he wants to denote by the term ‘*Einfühlung*’ (1903b, 120).

⁴ This definition can also be found in other writings of Lipps (see, e.g., Lipps 1903b, 122).

Although this is what Lipps explicitly says that he means by ‘Einfühlung’, again one may note that this is not the only sense in which he in fact uses the term. When discussing a case of his having *Einfühlung* with an acrobat, he says that in “the full meaning of ‘Einfühlung’”, the term denotes a state in which the opposition between himself and the other no longer obtains: “In it there is no longer any distinction between the acrobat up there and myself down here; I identify with him, I feel myself in him and in his place” (Lipps 1903b, 121, my transl.).⁵

For Lipps, then, ‘Einfühlung’ could be said to denote a state of having an experience which is fitting for the situation of another person, and of having this experience upon perceiving what state or situation this other person is in. As is evident from the passage just quoted, ‘Einfühlung’ also denotes a state in which the distinction between oneself and the other is to some extent broken down. Exactly what this means is difficult to say, but, as Edith Stein (1917) later pointed out, it does seem to entail that one, in a sense, loses sight of the other person. For Lipps ‘Einfühlung’ does not seem to denote so much a state of having an experience and of experiencing it as belonging to another person, as of having an experience as if one were in a certain situation, which, as it happens, is the situation of someone else.

When Lipps first introduced the notion of *Einfühlung* in relation to questions concerning the minds of other people, the purpose was to explain how we can experience other people, not as creatures who only behave in certain ways, but as individuals who think, feel, and strive in the same way we do.⁶ A similar project – although based on very different premisses – was also undertaken within the phenomenological movement. Both Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein developed accounts of *Einfühlung* in order to address this problem, and it was also in this context that Max Scheler put forth his account of empathy and fellow-feeling. In the following sections, I turn to Stein and Scheler.⁷

⁵ ‘It’, in the sentence just quoted, refers to a case of what Lipps calls “inner imitation”. As far as I can see, Lipps does not make any distinction between this and *Einfühlung*.

⁶ In a paper from 1905, however, he applies the notion in a somewhat confused and, as it appears to me, wholly unsuccessful attempt to show that we can know that other people have minds similar to our own. One of the claims of the paper is that other people have minds because we project our own minds upon them (Lipps 1905, 714).

⁷ For an account of “Husserl’s phenomenology of empathy” and for references to Husserl’s own works, see Elliston (1977).

4.3 *Edith Stein on Einfühlung*

Stein's description of *Einfühlung* can be found in her book *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*. The book was first published in 1917, and it was an abridged version of Stein's doctoral dissertation, which she wrote under the supervision of Husserl. The title of the dissertation was *Das Einfühlungsproblem in seiner historischen Entwicklung und in phänomenologischer Betrachtung*. As the title indicates, the dissertation contained a historical account of the development of the notion of *Einfühlung*. This part of the dissertation was left out in the published version, and is now no longer available (Stein 1917/1989, xiii).

In this section I will give a short presentation of Stein's main views on *Einfühlung*. My primary aim is to show that, according to Stein, if a person is experiencing a certain emotion, and if you reach a particular level of *Einfühlung* with respect to this emotion, then there is a way in which you feel this emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state. I also want to suggest that, in this kind of case, it is reasonable to assume that you feel this emotion because the other person is feeling a similar emotion or, at least, because you believe that he does so, but not because his feeling it has resulted in any actual or anticipated satisfaction or frustration of any of your wishes. Thus, although I cannot show that Stein's account of *Einfühlung* with respect to emotions strictly speaking entails all three of the ideas commonly found in contemporary accounts of empathy, I nevertheless hope to show that it comes very close to doing so.

Stein's discussion of *Einfühlung* is centered around the problem of describing how other people are given to us as experiencing subjects. In her historical treatment she had distinguished between the different uses to which her predecessors had put the notion of *Einfühlung*. She herself, however, saw the "basic problem to be the question of empathy as the perceiving [*Erfahrung*] of foreign subjects and their experience [*Erleben*]." (Stein 1917/1989, 1).⁸

In the following treatment of *Einfühlung*, Stein seems to make two assumptions. The first is that when we perceive other people we do not merely perceive automata who behave in certain ways. On the contrary, what we perceive are persons who think, will, and feel certain things, and in many cases we also see what they think, will, and feel. Other persons and their experiences are directly given to us, and their experiences are, in some cases, given to us as

⁸ When Stein speaks about subjects she does not limit herself to human beings. According to her, it is also through *Einfühlung* that religious people comprehend the mental states of their god(s) (Stein 1917/1989, 11). In the rest of this section I will disregard this extension, and speak about *Einfühlung* as a way of apprehending the mentality and the mental states of people.

being theirs. The problem, according to Stein, is to describe this “phenomenon of givenness” (1917/1989, 3).

The second assumption that Stein seems to make is that one way – or perhaps *the* way – of describing this “phenomenon of givenness” is by describing acts of *Einfühlung*. According to her, the givenness of other people as experiencing subjects “points back” to acts of *Einfühlung*. These acts are then described as “acts in which foreign experience [*Erleben*] is comprehended [*erfasst*]” (1917/1989, 6). Hence, Stein seems to assume that acts of *Einfühlung* are those acts through which other people are given to us as experiencing subjects.⁹

According to Stein, acts of *Einfühlung* are representational acts in which the experiences of other subjects are given (Stein 1917/1989, 10). That they are representational acts means that they differ from, e.g., acts of perception, but that they are similar to acts of memory and fantasy. Perception is, what could be called, a presentational act in that it has its object or content present alive before itself (Stein 1917, 5, 6). *Einfühlung*, memory, and fantasy, on the other hand, are representational acts in which the content or object is made present in representation.¹⁰

All representational acts are “representings” of experiences. Acts of memory or remembrance are “representings” of past experiences of the remembering subject. Acts of fantasy are “representings” of experiences which the subject has not had, but which she imagines herself as having. Acts of *Einfühlung*, finally, are “representings” of the experiences of other subjects (Stein 1917/1989, 8f.).

For all representational acts there are three stages or three “levels of accomplishment”. A person does not have to go through all these stages in the process of representing an experience, and in most cases she does not do so either. The three stages are as follows: (1) the emergence of the experience, (2) “the fulfilling explication” of the experience, and (3) the “comprehensive objectification” of the explicated experience (Stein 1917/1989, 10).

This is less complicated than it sounds. Take an act of remembrance as an example: At the first stage I remember a past experience of mine. I remember, for example, a particularly pleasant walk I once took along the ridge of a mountain. At this stage the memory appears to me as an external object. I

⁹ Although Stein here speaks about *Einfühlung* as “acts in which foreign experience [*Erleben*] is comprehended”, when she later goes on to describe particular acts of *Einfühlung* they are always acts in which a particular experience (‘*Erlebniss*’) of another person is comprehended. Presumably she believed that a person cannot be comprehended as an experiencing subject except through being comprehended as having a particular experience.

¹⁰ Stein uses the word ‘*vergegenwärtigen*’ for the way in which an object is made present in representational acts.

remember that I took the walk, and I can truthfully report that I remember it. However, if I linger on my memory a little longer it may happen that I become, as it were, pulled into it and start to experience it from the inside. This is the second stage of the process of representing a memory. Here I am no longer turned towards my past experience as an object, but I am rather inside it, turned towards the objects of the experiences I then had. It is as if I am walking along the mountain once again, seeing the ridge and the surrounding landscape stretch out in the distance, sensing the stones beneath my feet, and feeling the sun burning in my neck. At this stage I am no longer turned towards the image of me walking along the ridge, but I am, as it were, there once again, viewing the scene from the perspective of my past self (cf. Stein 1917/1989, 8f.). At the third stage, finally, I return to the position of the first stage, outside of my past experience. Once again I am turned toward it as an object, but this time my image and my understanding of the experience are, presumably, richer than the first time.

In the case of *Einfühlung* the three stages or levels of representing are explained and exemplified in the following way. At the first stage I perceive or otherwise learn about the mental state of another person. I learn, for instance, that someone is glad that he has passed his exam. At this stage of the process his joy appears to me as an object (1917/1989, 10). It stands before me as something enclosed and external. If I know that he is glad that he has passed his exam, then I know this in the same way as I know, e.g., that he is 6 feet tall or that he has brown hair. It is an external fact, which faces me as any other external, objective fact.

As I try to get a clearer understanding of the other's joy, however, my perspective on it changes. At this second stage of the process, I get pulled into it. I am no longer turned toward the joy as an external object, but I am "inside it turned toward its object" ("in ihm seinem Objekt zugewendet") (Stein 1917, 8, my transl.). Thus, if the other's joy is directed towards the fact that he has passed his exam, then, at this stage, I am inside his joy, turned toward the same fact. Rather than facing him and his emotion, I stand next to him facing the object of his emotion (*ibid.*).

At the third stage, finally, I withdraw from the other's experience, and again face it as an external object. This time, however, my image of his experience is, presumably, richer and more nuanced than it was the first time it emerged before me.

On Stein's view these three stages represent three different levels of *Einfühlung* (Stein 1917/1989, 10, 122, n. 24). Given her previous claim that a

person does not have to go through all these stages in an act of representing, one would think that this would hold in the case of *Einfühlung* too. However, when Stein later describes *Einfühlung* she seems to be putting so much stress on the second stage of the process that one can get the impression that she really saw this stage as being essential to *Einfühlung* (see, e.g., Stein 1917/1989, 13f.).

For our purposes it is not essential to determine what Stein's position was on this issue. For our purposes, it is clear that it is the second level of *Einfühlung* which is important. Only here can a person be said to take part in the experience of another person, and only here can something resembling empathy as emotional sharing take place. Let me now say something more about this stage of the process.

What happens when a person reaches the second level of *Einfühlung* is that she is pulled into the experience of another person. She comes to view this person's situation from his perspective and she comes to experience something similar to what he is experiencing. If she, for example, learns that another person is glad that he has passed his exam, then she will, when she reaches this level of *Einfühlung*, perceive the fact that he has passed his exam from his perspective and she will also experience something of the joy that he is experiencing.

Hence, whenever a person "feels herself into" the emotion of another person at this level, she will experience an emotion that is similar to the emotion that this other person is experiencing, or that he is believed by her to be experiencing. If she "feels herself into" the sadness of another person, she too will experience sadness. And if she "feels herself into" the joy of another person, she too will experience joy.

However, and this is where Stein takes a step in the direction of the current notion of empathy, if a person experiences joy or sadness in this way, then it will be a joy or sadness that differs from the ones she experiences when something fortunate or unfortunate has happened to her. It will be, as Stein puts it, a joy or sadness that is *non-primordial* ['nicht-originäre'] (1917/1989, 11).

As important as the notion of a non-primordial emotion is, it is unfortunately not very clear. Some idea of the extension of the notion can be gained from Stein's claim that experiences given in presentational acts, such as perception, are primordial, whereas experiences given in representational acts, such as memory, expectation, or fantasy, are non-primordial (Stein 1917/1989, 7). Exactly what it means for an experience to be primordial or non-primordial, however, is never explained. The most Stein says is that if an experience is given in a representational act, then it is not "bodily present" ("leibhaft gegenwärtig") before the subject performing the act (1917/1989, 7).

When it comes to non-primordial emotions, Stein is unfortunately not much clearer. At one point, when she discusses the example of the person who is glad that he has passed his exam, she contrasts the non-primordial joy we feel as part of having *Einfühlung* with him, with the primordial joy we feel when we are happy that he has passed his exam or when we are happy that he is glad; but she does not say anything specific about what the difference consists in (Stein 1917/1989, 14). All she does say, by way of a description, is that when I experience a non-primordial emotion, I experience an emotion that does not “well forth alive from my own I” (“sie entquillt nicht lebendig meinem Ich”) (Stein 1917, 10, my transl.).

This does not say much about what it means for an emotion to be non-primordial. It does seem to say, however, that if a person experiences a non-primordial emotion, then she does not experience this emotion as a current emotion of her own. Thus, if a person feels, e.g., joy or sadness as the result of having felt herself into the joy or sadness of another person, then, although she will experience some kind of joy and sadness, she will not take herself to be glad or sad.

Presumably this is a feature that the non-primordial emotion of *Einfühlung* shares with the non-primordial emotions a person can feel in memory, fantasy and expectation. However, when it comes to the emotion of *Einfühlung* there is, according to Stein, a second feature that distinguishes it from the others. This is that it, in its non-primordiality, announces the presence of a primordial emotion in someone else. Hence, whereas the non-primordiality of the emotion seems to account for the fact that the person feeling herself into someone else does not take the emotion she is feeling to be a current emotion of her own, this feature accounts for the fact that it appears to her as if she is feeling the emotion of someone else. Stein expresses this feature by saying that “[i]n my non-primordial experience I feel, as it were, led by a primordial one not experienced by me but still there, manifesting itself in my non-primordial experience” (Stein 1917/1989, 11).

This, one may finally note, is also a feature of *Einfühlung* which Stein stresses in her discussion of Lipps. Whereas Lipps claimed, as we have seen, that *Einfühlung* entails the disappearance of the boundaries between myself and the person whose experience I am feeling myself into, for Stein it is vital that such a dissolution does not take place. If it did, *Einfühlung* would no longer be a matter of comprehending another person’s experience as being his. Returning to Lipps’s example of *Einfühlung* with the acrobat, Stein says that what happens when I feel myself into him and his movements is not that I become one with

him, but rather that I take place beside him (“bei ihm”). I feel certain movements, but I do not feel these as my own. They are non-primordial movements announcing the presence of his primordial movements: “[I]n these non-primordial movements I feel led, accompanied, by his movements, which are there for me only in my non-primordial movements, and whose primordially is declared in my non-primordial movements” (Stein 1917, 17, my transl.). Thus, according to Stein, *Einfühlung* does not entail the disappearance of the boundaries between myself and the other.

Let me now close this section by relating Stein’s account of *Einfühlung* to the three ideas commonly found in contemporary accounts of empathy. Focusing on her description of the second level of *Einfühlung*, I want to claim, first, that if a person has *Einfühlung* with another person with respect to an emotion of a certain type, then she feels an emotion of the same type, but feels it in a way which does not entail that she is in the corresponding emotional state. Secondly, I also want to suggest that when she feels this emotion, then she feels it because she believes, or at least imagines, that this other person is feeling a similar emotion, but not because this has resulted in an actual or anticipated satisfaction or frustration of any of her wishes. That the former holds is, I think, evident from Stein’s claim that emotions felt in *Einfühlung* are non-primordial. That the latter holds is, I think, reasonable to assume, given the peculiar circumstances under which they arise, and given the fact that they are non-primordial. Judging from Stein’s description of how a person reaches the second level of *Einfühlung* with respect to the emotion of another person, there is no reason to assume that the emotion she feels is caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration. And judging from the fact that this emotion is non-primordial, i.e., that it, as opposed to emotions felt under ordinary circumstances, do not “well forth alive from my own I”, I think it is reasonable to assume that it is not caused in this way. If it were, it would more likely be primordial.

Consequently, I am prepared to ascribe to Stein both the second and the third idea characteristic of the current conception of empathy. When it comes to the first idea, however, the idea that empathy entails a state of emotional sharing, it is clear that no such idea is included in Stein’s account. In many cases it will of course be true that a person who has *Einfühlung* with respect to the emotion of someone else, will in fact share an emotion with this person. However, since Stein also speaks about cases of “mistaken *Einfühlung*”, i.e., cases where the other person is not in fact having the emotion which the empathizer thinks he has (Stein 1917/1989, 86f.), strictly speaking, *Einfühlung* with respect to

emotions does not entail a state of emotional sharing. Presumably, the same is true of the account given by Max Scheler, to which I now turn.

4.4 *Max Scheler on Empathy and Fellow-Feeling*

Scheler put forth his views on empathy and fellow-feeling in the book *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*. This work was first published in 1913 under the title *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühl und vom Liebe und Hass*. Several later editions followed, all under the current title.¹¹

Wesen und Formen der Sympathie consists of three parts. The first part deals with fellow-feeling, the second part with love and hatred, and the third part contains Scheler's answer to the problem of other minds. In what follows I will limit myself to the first part of the book and the treatment of empathy and fellow-feeling.

In this part Scheler distinguishes between a number of ways in which a person can share or feel the emotion of someone else. To begin with, he distinguishes between (1) states in which a person can be said genuinely to share the feeling of another person, and (2) states or attitudes which “merely contribute to our *apprehending, understanding, and, in general, reproducing* (emotionally) [“*Nachleben* (“*Nachfühlen*”)”] the experiences of others” (Scheler 1954, 8). To the latter group, (2), belongs *Nachfühlen* – what I will henceforth refer to as empathy – which is described as a particular kind of sensing of another person's experience.¹² In the former group, (1), Scheler distinguishes among four kinds of states, all of which differ from empathy in that they do not, or do not merely, involve an apprehension of the feeling of another person, but also an experience of a real feeling. These four different states are (1) community of feeling (*Miteinanderfühlen*), (2) fellow-feeling ‘about something’ (*Mitgefühl*), (3) emotional infection or contagion (*Gefühlsansteckung*), and (4) emotional identification (*Einsfühlung*) (Scheler 1954, 12). In what follows I will mainly focus on Scheler's descriptions of empathy, emotional contagion, and fellow-feeling.

¹¹ I will be quoting from the English translation of the 5th edition (1954) and from the 6th German edition (1973).

¹² ‘*Nachfühlen*’ should be distinguished from what Scheler later refers to as a “*Reproduktion*” of another person's experience (1954, 45f.). The latter involves having a real experience, whereas the former only involves sensing the quality of another person's experience. This difference is obscured in the English translation which uses ‘reproducing’ for both ‘*Nachfühlen*’ and ‘*Reproduktion*’.

The main purpose of this section is to present Scheler's account of empathy, and to argue that this account embodies, at least, two of the three ideas commonly found in contemporary accounts of empathy. The problem is with the idea that empathy entails a state of emotional sharing. Although Scheler in many places seems to presuppose that empathy is a state in which a person feels an emotion that someone else is currently having, I do not think that he would have held it to be impossible to have empathy with someone who is not having an emotion.

As for the other two ideas, however, it is relatively clear that Scheler did in fact subscribe to them. Thus, not only did he claim that empathy with respect to the emotion of another person involves feeling a similar kind of emotion in a way that does not entail being in the corresponding emotional state, he also seems to assume that this emotion is not caused by any actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration. Hence, if I cannot show that Scheler's account of empathy is a deliberate attempt at articulating the notion of empathy that I am interested in, I nevertheless hope to show that it is an attempt to articulate something importantly similar to that notion.

The section is organized as follows: To begin with I give a brief account of Scheler's views on feelings, and of the distinctions he makes among different kinds of feelings. This account is both short and selective, and it does by no means cover all of what Scheler has to say on this matter. It does, however, cover those parts which are of immediate importance for the understanding of his views on empathy and fellow-feeling, which is what I deal with next. Finally, I relate Scheler's notion of empathy to the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing.

In order to understand Scheler's categorization of the different ways in which a person can be said to share another's feeling, something needs to be said about his views on the feelings. Most important here is his distinction between feelings as feeling-states, and feelings as intentional functions of reception, but something should also be said about his division of the feelings into four different levels or classes.

The distinction between feelings as feeling-states or states of feelings¹³ (*Gefühlszustände*), and as intentional feelings is highly important in this context, but, unfortunately, it is not very clear. When Scheler introduces it in *Formalism*

¹³ The expressions 'state of feeling' and 'feeling-state' are merely different ways of translating the German 'Gefühlszustand'. The first expression is used by Peter Heath in his translation of *The Nature of Sympathy*. The second is used by Frings and Funk in their translation of *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values* (1973).

in *Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values* (1973, 255f.) he says that feeling-states “belong to contents and appearances”, whereas intentional feelings belong “to the functions of reception” (1973, 256). To exemplify he mentions bodily pain, which can be felt in different ways, such as, e.g., suffered, endured, or even enjoyed. In this case the pain is the feeling-state, whereas the suffering, enduring, or enjoying of the pain are different intentional feelings. Judging from this it seems, then, that feeling-states could be described as feelings as objects given in perception, whereas intentional feelings are ways of perceiving different objects, such as, e.g., feeling-states.

When it comes to feelings in general, these can, according to Scheler, be divided into four different levels or classes. These classes are: (1) sensible feelings, or bodily sensations, such as itches and aches; (2) vital feelings, or general bodily conditions, such as health and illness, vigor and fatigue; (3) pure psychic feelings, including, e.g., sadness and joy; and, finally, (4) spiritual feelings, such as blissfulness and despair (Scheler 1973, 332f.).¹⁴

In the rest of this section I will limit myself to the third class of feelings, the psychic feelings. This class seems to contain most of what we today call ‘emotions’, and it is also feelings from this class that Scheler mainly considers when he discusses empathy and fellow-feeling. It should be pointed out, however, that the psychic feelings are not the only kind of feelings that can be sensed in empathy or shared in fellow-feeling. Sensible feelings cannot, due to their being essentially bodily states, but vital and spiritual feelings can be both sensed and shared (Scheler 1973, 332f.).¹⁵

Let us now turn to Scheler’s views on the ways in which a person may be said to share or feel the emotions of another person. As was mentioned before, Scheler begins his treatment of these matters by distinguishing between, on the one hand, four kinds of genuine emotional sharing, and, on the other hand, one kind of sharing which consists merely in the sensing of the other person’s feeling. Of the first four kinds of emotional sharing, community of feeling and emotional identification are of limited interest for our purposes. Community of feeling is described as a state in which two (or more) people experience the same feeling-state, and in which their feelings are also directed towards the

¹⁴ Those who are familiar with William P. Alston’s (1967) categorization of the uses of the word ‘feel’ may find it instructive to compare Scheler’s distinctions with those of Alston. The first two classes of feelings distinguished by Scheler correspond nicely with Alston’s notions of localized bodily sensations and general bodily conditions. Scheler’s last two classes, however, do not seem to have any such straightforward equivalents in Alston’s list.

¹⁵ For a more detailed account of these matters, see Frings (1996).

same state of affairs (the example given is that of two parents standing by the side of their dead child, grieving the same loss). Emotional identification, on the other hand, is described as a state in which a person not only shares the feelings of another but also identifies with this other person in such a way that she loses herself inside the other (heteropathic identification) or loses the other inside herself (ideopathic identification) (Scheler 1954, 12f; 18f.).

The reasons why these states are of limited interest for our purposes is that, in community of feeling, the feelings of the persons involved are not dependent upon each other, and that, when a person identifies emotionally with another person, she no longer sees this person as an individual distinct from herself. In these respects, community of feeling differs from empathy and emotional contagion, which both involve having a feeling which is dependent upon the state or situation of another person, whereas emotional identification differs from empathy and fellow-feeling, which both involve an awareness of the difference between one's own state and the other's.

Turning now to the differences among empathy, emotional contagion, and fellow-feeling themselves, there are two main differences that should be mentioned at the outset: On the one hand, and as already hinted at, empathy and fellow-feeling differ from emotional contagion in that they necessarily involve an awareness of another person and his emotional experience, while emotional contagion does not. On the other hand, fellow-feeling and emotional contagion differ from empathy in that they necessarily involve a "real" emotional experience, while empathy does not. In what follows I will try to explain what the latter difference amounts to. I will begin by explaining what kind of feeling is involved in emotional contagion, and I will then move on to present Scheler's account of fellow-feeling and, in particular, his account of pity. Finally, I turn to his description of empathy.

Scheler introduces the phenomenon of emotional contagion or infection by way of some examples. The first of these has become standard in the literature.

We all know how the cheerful atmosphere in a 'pub' or at a party may 'infect' the newcomers, who may even have been depressed beforehand, so that they are 'swept up' in the prevailing gaiety. /.../ The same thing occurs when a group is infected by the mournful tone of one of its members, as so often happens among old women, where one recounts her woes, while the others grow more and more tearful (Scheler 1954, 15).

Although these examples do not tell us very much about the process of contagion, I think it is clear that the process is a peculiar one. Simply put, if a person has become infected by the emotion of someone else, then she is feeling an emotion merely because someone else seems to be feeling a similar emotion.

As Scheler often points out, for a person to become infected by the emotion of someone else it is not necessary that she believes that this other person is feeling any emotion – according to Scheler, it is not even necessary that the other person is actually feeling any emotion. Hence, if S feels happy because she has been infected with the happiness of O, then S cannot be said to feel happy because S believes that O is happy. If the latter is a requisite for S to feel happy as a result of a wish-satisfaction, then S cannot be said to do that either. Thus, if S feels happy because she has been infected by the happiness of O, then S feels happy *merely* because O seems to be feeling happy. The same goes, I think, for all cases of emotional infection.

Scheler's views on the nature of the emotions that result from emotional contagion come clearest to the fore when he compares contagion with pity (*Mitleid*). Pity is, according to Scheler, a kind of fellow-feeling (*Mitgefühl*); it is fellow-feeling with respect to the suffering of someone else. Both fellow-feeling and emotional contagion involve “real” emotional experiences, but they do this in different ways. Whereas emotional contagion involves “real” emotions in the sense of feeling-states (*Gefühlszustände*), fellow-feeling involves real feelings in the sense of an intentional “feeling of something” (*das intentionale “Fühlen von Etwas”*).

According to Scheler, the difference between fellow-feeling and emotional contagion is that whereas emotional contagion always involves the transference of a feeling as a feeling-state, fellow-feeling never involves such a transference (1956, 15).¹⁶ Instead fellow-feeling always involves an intentional feeling directed towards a feeling-state of someone else. Thus, while both fellow-feeling and emotional contagion involve “real” emotional experiences, fellow-feeling does so in the sense of a “real” intentional feeling, whereas emotional contagion does so in the sense of a “real” feeling-state.

Accordingly, pity, i.e., fellow-feeling with respect to the suffering of another person, is said to involve a suffering as an intentional feeling, but not as a feeling-state. To feel pity is “to be sorry at another person's sorrow, *as being his*” (1954, 37). On this account pity is also said to be a participating in or a sharing of the suffering of another. By this Scheler seems to mean that pity is a

¹⁶ It should be noted that the word ‘transference’, which occurs in Heath's translation, has no real equivalent in the German, at least not at the page referred to here. When Heath writes “it is characteristic of emotional infection that it occurs only as a transference of the *state* of feeling” (1954, 15), Scheler is actually writing “[v]ielmehr ist es charakteristisch für die Ansteckung, dass sie lediglich zwischen *Gefühlszuständen* stattfindet” (1973, 26). If Heath's translation does not capture precisely the word that Scheler uses, it is clear, though, that it captures the spirit of what he says.

sharing of another person's intentional suffering, directed at his state of suffering.

With this analysis of pity Scheler takes himself to be able to account for some phenomenological facts which other analyses have failed to account for. For example, by claiming that pity consists in an intentional suffering and not a state of suffering, Scheler thinks that he can account for the fact that in pitying someone we do not perceive ourselves to be suffering (Scheler 1954, 41f.). However, by claiming that pity nevertheless consists in a *real* suffering directed towards another person's suffering, he can also account for the fact that pity is a genuine emotion, and not some kind of "as-if"-emotion as Smith would have us believe. This latter point is also, I believe, connected with another claim of Scheler's which distinguishes his view on pity from all the views we have previously considered, the idea namely that pity, as well as all other kinds of fellow-feeling, are essentially based in love (Scheler 1954, 142).

Returning to emotional infection, one may note that from the claim that such infection always involves a transference of a feeling-state, Scheler seems to draw two conclusions. The first is that if a person has become infected with the suffering of someone else, then she always regards this suffering as her own:

Suffering itself does *not* become infectious through pity. Indeed, it is just where suffering is infectious that pity is completely excluded; for to that extent I no longer view it as the *other's* suffering, but as my *own*, which I try to get rid of, by putting the notion of suffering out of mind (Scheler 1954, 17).

The second conclusion is that if a state of suffering has been transferred from one person to another, then the suffering of the latter is a real suffering. Responding to Nietzsche's claim that pity is a "multiplier of misery" Scheler wrote:

Pity would be a 'multiplier of misery' only if it were identical with emotional infection. For only the latter – as we have seen – can produce in others a real suffering, a state of feeling [Gefühlszustand] akin to the infectious one. But such real suffering does not occur, however, in *true* fellow-feeling (1954, 18).

In sum, then, Scheler states at least three conditions that a person needs to fulfill if she is to be said to have been infected by the suffering of someone else. It might be that some of these conditions are entailed by each other, but for clarity's sake I prefer to state them separately. Thus,

If a person, S, has become infected with the suffering of another person, O, then

- (1) a presumed state of suffering of O has been transferred to S;

- (2) the state of suffering that S is feeling is regarded by S as a state of his own, not as the state of someone else; and
- (3) the state of suffering that S is feeling is a real suffering of S's.

Generalizing from this, we get the following conditions on emotional contagion:

If a person, S, has been infected with a feeling of another person, O, then

- (1) a presumed feeling-state of O has been transferred to S;
- (2) the feeling-state that S is feeling is regarded by S as a feeling-state of his own, not as a feeling-state of someone else; and
- (3) the feeling-state that S is feeling is a real feeling of S's.

With this as a background we can now move on to Scheler's views on empathy (*Nachfühlen*). The first thing to notice here is that whereas both fellow-feeling and emotional contagion involve "real" feelings on the part of the agent (albeit in different ways), empathy does not. In empathy one does in a way sense the feeling of another, but one does so in a way which differs both from fellow-feeling and from emotional contagion. Scheler puts it thus (I am now quoting the German since the English translation of this particular passage is somewhat unclear):

Das "Nachfühlen" und "Nachleben" haben wir also vom "Mitfühlen" streng zu scheiden. Es ist wohl ein *Fühlen* des fremden Gefühls, kein blosses Wissen um es oder nur ein *Urteil*, der Andere habe das Gefühl; gleichwohl ist es kein Erleben des wirklichen Gefühls als eines Zustandes; wir erfassen im Nachfühlen fühlend noch die *Qualität* des fremden Gefühls – ohne dass es in uns herüberwandert oder ein gleiches reales Gefühl in uns erzeugt wird. /.../ Ebenso wenig impliziert das Nachfühlen und Nachleben irgendein "Teilnehmen" am fremden Erleben. Wir können im Nacherleben dem Subjekt dieses Nacherleben ganz "gleichgültig" gegenüberstehen (1973, 20).¹⁷

Starting with the difference between empathy and fellow-feeling, it seems clear that the main difference is that whereas fellow-feeling consists in a

¹⁷ Cf. the English translation: "The reproduction of feeling or experience must therefore be sharply distinguished from fellow-feeling. It is indeed a case of feeling the other's feeling, not just knowing of it, nor judging that the other has it; but it is not the same as going through the experience itself. In reproduced feeling we sense the *quality* of the other's feeling, without it being transmitted to us, or evoking a similar real emotion in us. /.../ Equally little does the reproduction of feeling or experience imply any sort of 'participation' in the other's experience. Throughout our visualizing of the experience we can remain quite indifferent to whatever has evoked it." (1954, 9)

participation in another person's emotional experience, empathy does not. In fellow-feeling one shares another person's intentional feeling; that is, one is directed towards his feeling-state in much the same way as he is directed towards his state. Thus, when pitying someone who is suffering, one actually shares his suffering at his state of suffering.

In empathy, however, one can be completely "indifferent" towards the feeling-state of the other. Empathy involves some kind of feeling or sensing of the other's feeling-state, but it does not involve an intentional feeling ("intentionale Fühlen") directed towards this feeling-state. This means that empathy with respect to someone else's state of suffering is consistent not only with a suffering at his state of suffering, but also with a contrary feeling of joy. According to Scheler, such a joy is actually characteristic of the cruel man. He takes pleasure in the pain that he inflicts on others, and he does this by way of sensing their pain in empathy. The brutal man, on the other hand, is indifferent to the pain and suffering he inflicts on others, even though he is aware of it in empathy (1954, 14).

As to the difference between empathy and emotional contagion the passage quoted clearly states that empathy does not involve the transference and the subsequent feeling of any real feeling-state.¹⁸ Since emotional contagion is characterized both by the transference and the feeling of such a feeling-state, empathy is to be distinguished from emotional contagion.

However, the passage quoted does not merely say that empathy does not involve the transference of a feeling-state through infection. It also says that empathy does not involve any real feelings evoked in any other way. This, I take it, is what Scheler means to convey when he says that empathy involves the feeling of another's feeling "*ohne dass es in uns herüberwandert oder ein gleiches reales Gefühl in uns erzeugt wird*" (5, my emphasis).¹⁹ Thus, when we sense the feeling of someone else in empathy it is not the case that we feel a real feeling that has somehow been evoked in us.

¹⁸ This point is obscured in the English translation. Where the German says "gleichwohl ist es kein Erleben des wirklichen Gefühles als eines Zustandes", the English merely says that "it is not the same as going through the experience itself". The English translation is thereby completely oblivious to the fact that Scheler is here speaking of a feeling as a state.

¹⁹ The same distinction between, on the one hand, the transmitting or transference, i.e., the infection, of feeling-states, and, on the other, the evoking of feeling-states in ways other than infection, is also at work at a later place. When discussing genetic theories of fellow-feeling Scheler repeats: "Der im Mitleiden gegebene Gefühlszustand des B ist ganz in dem anderen gegeben; er wandert weder in den A, der mit-leidet, herüber, noch 'erzeugt' er einen 'gleichen' oder 'ähnlichen' Zustand in A." (1973, 52)

Remembering the three previously formulated conditions on emotional contagion, we can now note that none of them applies to empathy. That is,

If a person, S, has empathy with respect to the feeling of another person, O, then

- (1) it is not the case that a feeling-state of O's has been transferred to S;
- (2) S does not regard the feeling-state that S is feeling as his own, but as the feeling-state of someone else; and
- (3) it is not the case that the feeling-state that S is feeling is a real feeling of S's.

To this three further conditions should be added. If S has empathy with respect to a feeling of O's, then it is also the case that

- (4) S feels or senses the quality of the feeling-state of O,
- (5) it is not the case that S is actually in the same or a similar feeling-state as O, and
- (6) S believes that O is in this particular feeling-state.

The fourth condition is needed to make clear that empathy does involve some kind of feeling of a feeling-state. The fifth is needed to rule out that S is feeling a feeling-state that has been evoked in S in ways other than infection. And the sixth condition is needed to account for the difference between empathy and emotional contagion which I mentioned in the beginning of this section: whereas empathy requires an awareness of a feeling-state in someone else, emotional contagion does not presuppose any such awareness.

Let me now end this section on Scheler by showing how his account of empathy relates to the three ideas commonly found in contemporary accounts of empathy. Starting with the first idea, that empathy entails a state of emotional sharing, I do not think that it is a necessary part of Scheler's account. Although he does describe empathy as a state in which you sense the quality of another person's feeling, and thereby seems to presuppose that this other person is experiencing a feeling, he uses similar expressions to describe emotional contagion; and there it is explicitly stated that the other person does not have to experience a feeling. One may also note that similar expressions are also used by Stein when she describes *Einfühlung*, and since she clearly states that *Einfühlung* with respect to emotions does not presuppose emotional sharing, and

since Scheler, who obviously had read Stein, does not object to this, there is, I think, no reason to believe that he held any different view.

The other two ideas, however, can, I believe, be found in Scheler. First, I think it is reasonable to assume that his account of empathy presupposes the idea that when you feel an emotion as part of having empathy with someone else, then you feel this emotion because this other person is, or is believed by you to be, in a certain state or situation, but not because of any actual or anticipated satisfaction or frustration of any of your wishes. Unfortunately, Scheler does not say anything about how the emotion of *Nachfühlen* is or is not produced. All he says is that *Nachfühlen* is based on identification with another person, but he never explains how this identification is supposed to give rise to an emotion (Scheler 1954, 96f.). When discussing Lipps's theory of *Einfühlung* he also brings up the idea that we can evoke certain feelings through imitating the behavior and facial expressions of other people, but, as far as I can see, he never actually says that this either is or is not the way in which the feelings of *Nachfühlen* are produced.²⁰ On the other hand, Scheler does not say anything to suggest that these feelings are in fact caused by some kind of wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration, and that, together with the fact that they are neither feeling-states nor real intentional feelings, is good reason, I think, to believe that he did not hold them to be caused in this way.

Secondly, I find it even more reasonable to ascribe to Scheler the idea that when you feel an emotion as part of having empathy with someone else, then, although you do feel it, you do not feel it in such a way that you are in the corresponding emotional state. What Scheler himself says, as we have seen, is that having empathy with respect to the emotion of another person involves sensing the quality of this emotion, without being in the same kind of feeling-state and without having the same kind of intentional feeling. This means, I take it, that empathy involves feeling an emotion in a way which does not entail being in the corresponding emotional state. Thus, if you feel sadness as part of having empathy with someone who is sad, then that does not mean that you are sad too. Similarly, if you feel anger as part of having empathy with someone who is angry, then you are feeling this anger in a way which does not entail that

²⁰ When discussing Lipps, Scheler does not question the idea that we can evoke emotions in ourselves through imitating other people. His main objection against Lipps is rather directed against the claim that it is by imitating the emotional expressions of other people, and by subsequently projecting upon them the emotions which this gives rise to, that we first come to experience them as experiencing subjects. Scheler's objection against this is that it seems to presuppose that we already have some way of discriminating between those expressions which are to be counted as emotional expressions and those which are not (Scheler 1954, 10).

you are angry. If you were sad or angry, we could perhaps have said that you had been infected with the emotion of the other, but we could not have said that you had empathy with him.

With Stein's account of *Einfühlung* and Scheler's account of *Nachfühlen* we are taken one step further towards the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing. Although neither account seems to construe *Einfühlung* or *Nachfühlen* with respect to emotions as necessarily involving a state of emotional sharing, both accounts clearly involve the idea that, in order to have such *Einfühlung* or *Nachfühlen*, you have to experience an emotion in a way that differs from the way in which you experience your ordinary emotions: as I interpret it, you have to experience an emotion in a way that does not entail being in the corresponding emotional state. This idea, and the idea that this is an important part of what separates empathy from sympathy and emotional contagion, are still very much alive among contemporary philosophers writing about empathy, and it is from Stein and, in particular, Scheler that these ideas ultimately stem. In view of this and in view of the extent to which these ideas inform and set the limits for the current discussions, rather than saying that Stein and Scheler take a significant step towards the current conception of empathy, perhaps it is more accurate to describe them as its main instigators.

With Stein and Scheler we have also come to the end of this short history of the notion of empathy in Western philosophy. I have sought to show how and to what extent the accounts given by some famous philosophers of the past can be said to approximate the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing. I have distinguished three ideas that are characteristic of this conception of empathy, and I have tried to show which of these ideas are to be met with in these accounts. In the course of doing this I have also wanted to show how the current conception of empathy has developed out of these accounts: How Spinoza and Hume began by developing the idea that a person can acquire an emotion upon entertaining the idea of a similar emotion in someone else, without having to have any prior interest in the state or situation of this other person; how, in the work of Smith and Schopenhauer, the idea of an emotion acquired independently of such interests was coupled with the idea of an emotion that you feel without necessarily being in the corresponding emotional state; and, finally, how this idea of a special way of having or feeling an emotion was picked up and stressed in the accounts of empathy given by Edith Stein and Max Scheler.

Since none of the accounts considered so far includes a counterpart to the idea of empathy as a state that requires that two (or more) persons share an emotion, strictly speaking we have not yet reached the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing. What we have reached, however, is the starting-point for most contemporary accounts of empathy, some of which do include this idea. These accounts, and the conceptions of empathy that they attempt to articulate, will be the topic of the next chapter.

PART 2

EMPATHY AS EMOTIONAL SHARING

CHAPTER 5

CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS OF EMPATHY

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters I have sought to show to what extent the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing can be found in the writings of some earlier thinkers. Now it is time to move on to the conception itself, and to the contemporary philosophical discussion concerning empathy.

In this chapter I will present and discuss some of the main accounts of empathy given by philosophers in the last decade. In section 5.2, I consider an attempt at defining ‘empathy’ in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, viz. the definition put forth by Nancy E. Snow (2000). I have decided to start with this definition because I find it to be the clearest account of empathy given so far. This makes it useful as a starting point, but it also makes it somewhat easy to criticize. In what follows I will propose some counterexamples to Snow’s definition, and I will also show where I think her definition goes wrong.

Snow’s account of empathy embodies two of the three ideas characteristic of the notion of empathy as emotional sharing. According to Snow, having empathy with respect to the emotional state of another person requires feeling an emotion because this person is feeling a similar kind of emotion but not because of an actual or anticipated satisfaction or frustration of any of your wishes. However, when it comes to the idea that empathy involves feeling an emotion in a way that does not entail being in an emotional state, Snow seems to disagree. Judging from her examples, it is clear that she thinks that having empathy with respect to the emotional state of another person entails being in the same kind of state.

This is a view on the nature of empathetic emotions that I, and many with me, do not share. In order to find an alternative to Snow’s view I therefore turn, in sections 5.3 and 5.4, to those philosophers who claim that although having empathy with respect to the emotion of another person entails, in some sense, experiencing a similar emotion, it does not entail being in the same kind of emotional state.

In section 5.3, I consider the claim that empathy requires imagining someone else's emotion. Among the philosophers who claim that empathy does not entail being in an emotional state, this is the most common way of characterizing the nature of the empathetic emotion. The problem with this characterization, however, is that it is not altogether clear what it amounts to. In particular, one wonders whether imagining an emotion entails feeling an emotion in any stronger sense of the term. I am inclined to believe that it does not, and for this reason I am also inclined to believe that this way of characterizing empathy runs the risk of making empathy devoid of all feeling.

In section 5.4, however, I consider a third way of characterizing empathetic emotions, which does not run this risk. This is the view that empathy entails having an emotion "off-line". In this section, I present the notion of an off-line emotion as it has been developed by Robert M. Gordon (1996), and I also give a brief presentation of an account of empathy based on this notion.

Before I begin the actual discussion there are two things I want to point out. The first is that although the following presentation covers most of the accounts of empathy given by philosophers during the last decades, it does not cover all of them, and it does not cover them to an equal degree. To begin with, there are some accounts that are difficult to place within the classificatory scheme I have here developed; that is, there are some accounts that are either unclear or undecided as to how they specify the exact nature of the empathetic emotions. Sometimes it is left undecided whether empathy requires feeling an emotion or only imagining one.¹ And sometimes, when it is said that empathy involves feeling an emotion, it is difficult to tell whether or not this means that you have to feel it in any special way.²

Of the accounts that I do consider, there are also many aspects that are left unnoticed. For example, David Woodruff Smith (1989), in his description of the

¹ See, e.g., Stephen Darwall, who only says that empathy with another person "consists in feeling what one imagines he feels, or perhaps should feel (fear, say), or in some imagined copy of these feelings" (Darwall 1998, 261).

² See, e.g., Chismar (1988) and Feagin (1996). When it comes to Feagin, however, it should be noted that she later clarifies her position. In the paper, "Imagining Emotions and Appreciating Fiction" (1997), Feagin says that empathy with respect to the emotional states of real people entails, or at least is not incompatible with, being in the same kind of emotional states, whereas empathy with respect to the emotional states of fictional characters entails only imagining those states. In this paper, Feagin also raises the question whether this talk about imagining an emotion does not run the risk of making empathy too "unemotional". She seems to think that it does, but the only way of avoiding this problem would, according to her, have to involve appeals to qualia, and this, she claims, would give rise to even more serious problems (Feagin 1997, 58).

empathic experience, makes a number of interesting remarks and distinctions which I do not discuss in the following, and the same is true of almost every writer presented in this section.

The second thing I want to point out concerns the three ideas characteristic of the conception of empathy that I am interested in. Although I will not explicitly argue for it, I hope the following discussion will make evident that these ideas can indeed be found in many, if not most, of the philosophers writing about empathy today. Given that my discussion will focus on how these philosophers have described the way in which you feel or experience an emotion when you have empathy with someone else, I take it that it will at least become clear that most of them embrace the idea that having empathy with respect to an emotion of a certain type entails, in some sense, feeling an emotion of the same type, although not in the sense of being in the same type of emotional state.

The idea that empathy entails a state of emotional sharing, has been stressed, not only by Nancy E. Snow (2000), but also by Susan L. Feagin (1996 and 1997) and James Harold (2000). And the idea that empathetic emotions must be caused in a particular way is implicitly embraced by practically every contemporary philosopher writing on the subject. Admittedly, different writers have different views about how an empathetic emotion can be caused, but the explanations they offer all basically amount to different versions of the explanations given by Hume, Adam Smith, and Lipps. All of them claim that an empathetic emotion must be caused by the state or situation of the other person or by the empathizer's entertaining some thought or idea about his state or situation, and none of them claim, at least not to my knowledge, that it can be caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration.

5.2 Empathy and Sharing Emotional States

According to some philosophers, if you feel an emotion as part of having empathy with respect to the emotional state of another person, then it is either possible or necessary that you feel this emotion in such a way that you are in the same kind of emotional state (Snow 2000; Kennett 2002). In this section, I will discuss a theory of empathy involving the claim that it is necessary that you are in the same kind of emotional state, the theory proposed by Nancy E. Snow.

In the paper "Empathy" (2000) Snow put forth the following definition of 'empathy':

S empathizes with O's experience of emotion E if and only if: (a) O feels E; (b) S feels E because O feels E; and (c) S knows or understands that O feels E (Snow 2000, 68).

Snow proposed this definition as an alternative to and an improvement of a definition previously formulated by Elliot Sober and David Sloan Wilson (Sober and Wilson 1998). According to the latter:

S empathizes with O's experience of emotion E if and only if O feels E, S believes that O feels E, and this causes S to feel E for O (Sober and Wilson 1998, 234).

On the face of it, this latter definition differs from that proposed by Snow in three respects:

- (1) while Snow demands that S feels E because O feels E, Sober and Wilson demand that S feels E because she *believes* that O feels E;
- (2) while Snow demands that S feels E, Sober and Wilson demand that S feels E *for* O; and
- (3) while Snow demands that S *knows or understands* that O feels E, Sober and Wilson only demand that S *believes* that O feels E.

Snow motivates her changes in the following way:

(1) The first change – that from demanding that S feels E because S believes that O feels E, to demanding that S feels E because O feels E – is made for two reasons. The first is that there does not seem to be any reason why one should limit the definition of ‘empathy’ in such a way that S’s feeling of E cannot be caused in ways other than through S’s belief that O feels E. The second reason is to allow for the possibility that S comes to believe that O feels E, and subsequently also to empathize with O, through noticing that she is feeling E (Snow 2000, 65 and 67). Neither of these possibilities are allowed for by Sober and Wilson’s definition.

(2) The second change – from saying that S feels E for O, to saying that S only feels E – is made in order to preserve what Snow sees to be the difference between empathy and sympathy. According to Sober and Wilson, both empathy and sympathy consist in one person’s feeling an emotion for someone. The difference is that whereas you can empathize with someone with respect to both positive and negative emotional states, you can sympathize with someone only with respect to negative states (Sober and Wilson 1998, 235).³ If, in other words,

³ Another and, according to Sober and Wilson, more important difference is that only empathy requires a state of emotional sharing. If you believe that something bad has happened to another person, then you can sympathize with him, even if he is not currently experiencing a negative emotion. Sober and Wilson thus define ‘sympathy’ by saying that “S sympathizes with O precisely when S believes that something bad has happened to O and this causes S to feel bad for O” (ibid., 235).

you feel glad for someone who is glad, then you can empathize, but not sympathize, with him.

On Snow's view, on the other hand, the difference goes deeper than this. According to her, sympathy is a state of feeling an emotion (presumably a negative emotion such as sadness) *for* someone, whereas empathy is a state of feeling an emotion *with* someone. This means that empathy is a state wherein one person feels an emotion that is qualitatively similar to or qualitatively identical with someone else's emotion, but in which she does not necessarily feel anything "for" this person. Hence, to feel sadness for someone who feels sad would be, according to Snow's view, to have sympathy with this person, whereas to feel sad together with someone who feels sad would be considered a state of empathy. According to Snow, this way of characterizing empathy is more accurate than Sober and Wilson's way, and it is for this reason that she prefers to change the condition from saying that S feels E for O to saying merely that S feels E (Snow 2000, 66).

(3) The third change, finally – that from saying that S believes that O feels E, to saying that S knows or understands that O feels E – is made in order to exclude those cases in which S believes that O feels E but has no good reasons for believing this. Since knowledge presupposes good reasons, and since it is already assumed that O is in fact feeling E, one way of doing this is by adding the requirement that S knows that O feels E (Snow 2000, 65).

For these same reasons I prefer Snow's definition to that proposed by Sober and Wilson. Her definition is a better articulation of the current conception of empathy as emotional sharing, and I also think that there are independent reasons for preferring this conception of empathy to that expressed in Sober and Wilson's definition.

To begin with, I see no reason why having empathy with another person with respect to a certain emotional state should require feeling an emotion because one believes that this person is in this emotional state. In the literature on empathy it is commonly assumed that there are other ways of acquiring an empathetic emotion which do not depend upon such a belief, and I see no reason to abandon this assumption. On the contrary, given that this, as Snow points out, allows for the possibility that S comes to believe that O feels E, and also to have empathy with O, through noticing that she herself is feeling E, I think it is an assumption that should be maintained.

I also share Snow's views on the difference between empathy and sympathy. Even though I would not go so far as to say that her way of making the distinction is more accurate than that of Sober and Wilson, I still think that it is

preferable. It posits empathy as something significantly different from sympathy, and, ever since Scheler, it is also by far the most common way of making the distinction.⁴

However, even though I agree with Snow on these points, this does not mean that I am entirely satisfied with either her definition or the view of empathy that underlies it. My main objection concerns a claim that is not clearly expressed in the definition, but that, judging from Snow's examples, is nevertheless a vital part of her basic view. This is the claim that having empathy with respect to another person's emotional state entails being in the same kind of emotional state; that is, that having empathy with respect to, say, the anger of someone who is furious implies that you are angry yourself. I find this view to be both counterintuitive and problematic, and I will later show why.

To begin with, however, I want to point to some problems which relate to Snow's explicit definition. These are problems that do not seem to stem from her underlying conception of empathy, but rather from her way of formulating the definition. I will show that her definition is in some ways too wide and in at least one way too narrow, and I will also suggest how one can reformulate it in order to avoid this criticism.

Consider the following example: My colleague in the lab is holding in his hand a test-tube filled with nerve-gas. Suddenly and for no apparent reason he becomes afraid that he will drop the tube. This causes his hand to shake, and when I perceive this, I become afraid that he will drop the tube.

Assuming that I know that my colleague is afraid that he will drop the test-tube, then all of Snow's conditions for empathy are satisfied: (a) My colleague is afraid that he will drop the test-tube; (b) I am afraid that he will drop the test-tube because he is; and (c) I know that he is afraid that he will drop the test-tube. Thus, on Snow's definition we would be forced to say that I have empathy with my colleague with respect to his fear. Still, I think it is clear that this is not what we want to say.

To see why this counts as a case of empathy on Snow's definition, we may begin by noting that the reason why we here can say that I am afraid because my colleague is afraid is that there is a causal chain connecting his fear, his hand's shaking, and my perception of his hand's shaking, which links my fear to his. Since Snow accepts that a person can feel an empathetic emotion as a result of

⁴ Some of those who have claimed that sympathy (or compassion) differs from empathy in that the former, but not the latter, necessarily involves a feeling for the other person, are Chismar (1988), Piper (1991), Blum (1994b), Darwall (1998), Goldie (2000), and Nussbaum (2001).

entertaining a belief about the state of another person, as long as it is also felt because this other person is actually feeling a similar emotion, I think that she must accept causal chains like the one described.

I believe that this is as it should be. Admittedly, I do not think that in order for me to have empathy with my colleague it is necessary that my fear is caused by his fear, but I do believe that it should be allowed as a possible cause, and I also think that my belief that my colleague may come to drop the test-tube should be so allowed. The problem is not that I feel fear because I believe that he may come to drop the test-tube. The problem is rather that I feel fear because I believe that he may drop it and because I wish that he does not drop it. The problem is, in other words, that I feel fear because I perceive the possibility that my wish – that he does not drop the test-tube – becomes frustrated. The way to solve the problem is, therefore, to add the condition that whenever a person feels an emotion as part of having empathy with another person, then it is not the case that she feels this emotion because one of her wishes has become satisfied or frustrated or because she perceives the possibility that one of her wishes might be satisfied or frustrated.

It should be noted, however, that even though Snow's definition does not explicitly say that emotions felt as part of having empathy cannot be caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration, judging from her descriptions of how empathetic emotions are in fact caused, it does seem as if she tacitly adheres to this principle. Snow mentions a number of ways in which empathetic emotions can be caused, some of which do and some of which do not presuppose a belief or idea about the state or situation of the other person. In none of these cases, however, does she seem to assume that the empathetic emotion is caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration.

If this kind of counterexample does not show that there is anything wrong with condition (b) in Snow's definition, I do think that there is another kind of example that shows this. Consider the following: S is visiting her doctor. It is plain to see that the doctor is upset about something. Assume now that because he is so upset, he makes a mistake and gives S a drug that, due to its chemical composition, induces a state of agitation in her. Thus, after the drug has had its effect on S, S is upset, and she is, furthermore, upset because her doctor is upset. Once again, all of Snow's conditions for empathy are fulfilled, and yet I do not think that either we or Snow really want to say that S here has empathy with her doctor.

As in the previous example, the problem seems to be that S's emotion is caused in the wrong way. This time, however, the problem is not that S is upset because she wishes that O, in this case the doctor, were not upset. As the example is constructed, S is not upset because she has such a wish, and, therefore, the problem cannot be solved by adding the clause that it cannot be the case that her emotion is caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration.

To solve the problem this time, I believe we have to qualify condition (b) in Snow's definition. This is the condition that says that S has to feel E because O feels E, and, as the example shows, this condition is too wide. To narrow it, and at the same time allow for cases where S acquires an emotion through, for example, imitating the behavior of O, I propose that we specify (b) by saying that S has to feel E because S has been exposed to an expression of E in O.

If these examples show that Snow's definition of 'empathy' is too wide in some respects, I also want to claim that there is one respect in which it is too narrow. As is suggested by Adam Smith's theory of sympathy, I think it should be possible for a person to experience an empathetic emotion as a result of having perceived, learned of, or otherwise having been exposed to the situation of another person, without necessarily having to experience this emotion because the other person is experiencing a similar emotion. That is, it should be possible to feel, e.g., joy as part of having empathy with someone, and to feel this joy not because this other person is feeling joy, but because one knows about the fortunate circumstances he finds himself in. Since Snow's definition does not allow for such cases, I think we need to widen it.

I now turn to my final complaint against Snow's account of empathy. This concerns her view on the nature of the emotions that a person feels and can feel as part of having empathy with someone else. Although it is not evident from her definition, judging from some of Snow's examples, she appears to believe that if a person, S, has empathy with another person with respect to an emotional state, then S is in the same kind of emotional state. This seems to be suggested in the example with Barbara's having empathy with Bob with respect to his sadness that his father has died, where she says that "[w]hen she empathizes with Bob, they both feel sad about the same fact: his father's death" (Snow 2000, 66). And it seems to be stated explicitly in the example of her having empathy with respect to your happiness that you have gotten a new job, where she says that "[b]ecause you are so happy, I, too, become happy that you've gotten the job" (ibid.).

As already mentioned, Snow is rather alone in upholding this view. According to most contemporary philosophers writing about empathy, having empathy with someone with respect to an emotional state does not entail being in the same kind of emotional state. You do not have to be happy in order to have empathy with someone who is happy, and you do not have to be sad in order to have empathy with someone who is sad.

I find the view expressed by Snow to be highly counterintuitive. It is odd to say that a person has to be sad in order to have empathy with someone who is sad, and it is simply absurd to say that a person has to be angry in order to have empathy with respect to someone's anger. This is, however, not the only reason why I think we should discard this view. There are at least two other reasons: one pertaining to the task of separating empathy from sympathy, and another pertaining to the task of distinguishing between empathy and emotional contagion.

According to Snow, empathy differs from sympathy in that the former is a state of feeling something *with* someone whereas the latter is a state of feeling something *for* someone. Thus, if you have empathy with someone, then you feel an emotion with this person, in the sense that you feel an emotion that is similar to an emotion that he is feeling. If, on the other hand, you feel sympathy for someone, then you feel some kind of positive concern for him. While having empathy with someone is not incompatible with having sympathy for this person, empathy is nevertheless said to differ from sympathy in that it is not necessary to feel a concern for a person in order to have empathy with him.

Now, when it is said that it is not necessary that if a person has empathy with someone, then she also has sympathy for this person, this can be taken to mean two different things. It can either be taken to mean that it is never necessary that empathy implies sympathy, or it can be taken to mean that it is not necessary in all cases that empathy implies sympathy. On the latter interpretation, there could, in other words, be cases where having empathy with another person implies or entails having sympathy for him, whereas on the former interpretation there are no such cases.

I now want to show that on Snow's definition of 'empathy' it follows that there are cases in which having empathy with another person entails having sympathy for him. I also want to claim that this conclusion is counterintuitive, and that, consequently, there must be something wrong with her definition.

The reason why Snow's account of empathy has this consequence is that it requires a person to be in an emotional state in order to have empathy with respect to someone's emotional state. Of course, having empathy with someone

with respect to his anger or sadness does not entail having sympathy for him. Even if having empathy with Bob entails being sad that his father has died, that does not, by itself, entail feeling anything *for* Bob. However, if we change the example to one in which you have empathy with someone with respect to his sympathy for himself, then it is clear that empathy does in fact entail sympathy. If you cannot have empathy with someone with respect to an emotional state unless you are in the same kind of state, and if having sympathy for someone is to be in an emotional state, then you cannot have empathy with someone with respect to his sympathy for himself, unless you too have sympathy for him.

I find this consequence to be counterintuitive. I am not so much against the claim that empathy should in some cases entail sympathy, but I do think that it should be possible to have empathy with someone with respect to his sympathy for himself without necessarily having sympathy for him. Since Snow's account of empathy does not allow for this, and since this is partly due to her view of empathy with respect to emotional states as entailing being in an emotional state oneself, I believe that this speaks against this view.

The second problem with the claim that a person may be in an emotional state as part of having empathy with someone else is that this tends to blur the distinction between empathy and emotional contagion. On Snow's view, the only essential difference between these two phenomena seems to be that whereas it is possible to become infected with the emotion of someone else without having to know or believe that this person has this emotion, if you have empathy with someone with respect to a certain emotion, then you must know that he has it (Snow 2000, 68).

There are, however, some philosophers who have claimed that the difference goes deeper than this. As we saw in Part 1, Scheler believed, for example, that there is also a difference in the way in which you have your emotion when you are in these states: if you have empathy, then you sense the quality of the emotion without it being a real emotion of your own, whereas if you have been infected with an emotion, then it is a real emotion of yours. I agree with this view. I see emotional contagion in analogy with the infection of diseases: just as you ordinarily cannot be infected with the disease of someone else without becoming sick, so you cannot be infected with the emotion of someone else without really becoming sad, angry, glad, etc. Empathy, on the other hand, does not imply being in an emotional state. Hence, since Snow's view on empathy involves the claim that it does, she cannot distinguish between empathy and emotional contagion in this way.

As I have said previously, Snow is one of the few philosophers who has claimed that empathy with respect to someone's emotional state requires being in the same kind of state. The common view is rather that empathy requires, at the most, imagining feeling the emotion of the other, or, simply, imagining this emotion. This view has the benefit of not committing one to the claim that empathy entails being in an emotional state, but, since it seems perfectly possible to imagine an emotion without feeling anything at all, it also seems to make empathy devoid of all feeling. For this reason I think we need a different account. Nevertheless, since this view is so popular, I will devote the next section to a brief presentation of it.

5.3 Empathy and Imagining Emotions

In this section I will briefly discuss the view that empathy with respect to the emotion of another person requires imagining this emotion. As I said earlier, I do not share this view, but, since it is so common among contemporary philosophers, I will spend this section making some short comments on what I take to be its main benefits and drawbacks.⁵

The main advantage of claiming that empathy entails imagining someone else's emotion is that this is consistent with perceiving empathy as a state in which you apprehend this emotion without necessarily being in the corresponding emotional state. If you imagine or form some kind of mental image of, e.g., another person's sadness, then you are in some sense apprehending his sadness, but you cannot, on that account alone, be said to be sad. Similarly, if you imagine another person's anger, then it seems reasonable to say that you apprehend his anger, but you can hardly be said to be angry yourself. Imagining someone else's emotion or emotional state does not entail that you are in the same kind of emotional state.

This, I think, is the main reason why so many philosophers describe empathy in terms of imagining someone else's emotion. There is among these philosophers a widespread intuition that although empathy requires, in some sense, feeling or sensing what the other feels, it does not require being in the same kind of emotional state as he is. One way of characterizing empathy which

⁵ The view itself can be found, for example, in Smith (1989, 122), Meyers (1994, 33), Deigh (1996, 175), Goldie (2000, 195), Harold (2000, 343) and Nussbaum (2001, 302).

is true to this intuition is by saying that empathy involves imagining the emotion of someone else.⁶

However, given the view of empathy that I want to develop, there are two problems with this claim. One is that it is not clear whether imagining another person's emotion entails feeling an emotion in any stronger sense of the term. The second is that, according to the view I want to develop, there are other ways, besides imagining an emotion, in which you can evoke emotions felt as part of empathy. Thus, if the first problem is that it is unclear whether imagining an emotion is sufficient for feeling a similar emotion, the second is that, on the view I want to develop, imagining another person's emotion is not necessary for having empathy with this person. In what follows I will make some comments on the first problem.

As far as I can see, imagining an emotion does not entail feeling a similar emotion. In order for me to imagine, say, another person's fear, I may have to form some kind of mental image of fear, but I do not have to feel fear; I do not have to feel a fluttering in my stomach and I do not have to experience any other kind of bodily agitation characteristic of fear. I do not want to put too much stress here on the bodily side of the affective experiences characteristic of different emotions, but it does seem to me that imagining someone else's emotion is something that can be done in an instant, whereas actually feeling an emotion takes time and leaves a certain residue in one's body; you cannot just shake the feeling off.

One philosopher who seems to share this view on the relation between imagining an emotion and feeling one is Susan Feagin (1997). Another is Peter Goldie. According to Goldie, "[e]mpathy is a process or procedure by which a person *centrally imagines the narrative* (the thoughts, feelings, and emotions) of another person" (2000, 195). This seems to mean that in order to have empathy with another person, I may have to imagine his emotions. However, as is clear from Goldie's claim that, in this process, "I can find myself actually *having* certain experiences, including emotional ones" (ibid., 197), it does not mean that I must have such experiences. If I *can* find myself having them, then I can also find myself not having them.⁷

⁶ For a relatively clear expression of this view, see Meyers (1994, 33). It also seems to be implied in Goldie's discussion of the differences between empathy and, what he calls, emotional sharing (Goldie 2000, 193f.).

⁷ Later in the text, however, Goldie says that "to empathize successfully one has ... to have the current thoughts and feelings of the other person" (2000, 198).

When it comes to the other proponents of the view that empathy requires or may require imagining the emotion of someone else, it is much more difficult to say whether they believe that such acts of imagination do or do not entail feeling an emotion of the kind in question. Meyers only says that it is possible to imagine an emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state (Meyers 1994, 33), and this much also seems to be implied in the account given by Nussbaum in *Upheavals of Thought* (2001).⁸

Harold, finally, has a slightly different view: he holds that empathy requires not only imagining the emotion of someone else, but also feeling an emotion that is similar to the emotion of this other person (Harold 2000, 343). Harold develops an account of empathy based on the idea of mental simulation. This is the idea that you can predict and explain how other people will think, feel, and behave through imagining or simulating being in their situations and then taking notice of what thoughts, feelings and inclinations this gives rise to in you. Simulation-theory, thus, seems to presuppose Adam Smith's idea that you can put yourself in certain mental states by imagining being in certain situations with certain beliefs and desires. Similarly to Smith, simulation-theorists also often hold that the states which the process of simulation gives rise to are of a peculiar kind. For example, Robert M. Gordon (1996) has claimed that when you feel an emotion as a result of simulation, in most cases you have this emotion "off-line", meaning that you have it in such a way that it does not affect or influence your behavior in the way ordinary emotions do. If you have, e.g., a case of off-line anger, then you do not have the same tendency to lash out at other people as you might have when you experience "on-line" anger.

Now, when Harold develops his account of empathy along the lines of simulation-theory he tends to do it in a slightly different way than one might expect. Rather than saying, as Gordon and other simulation-theorists do, that you evoke real, albeit off-line, emotions through imagining or simulating the beliefs and desires that are the causes of an emotion in someone else, Harold speaks about imagining another person's emotion as if that entailed feeling a similar kind of emotion off-line (Harold 2000, 341). Admittedly, at one point he does say that I can feel sad and, on that account, have empathy with another

⁸ When it comes to Nussbaum, however, it should be pointed out that in *Poetic Justice* (1995), she gives a slightly different – or, perhaps, only more detailed – account of empathy. There she speaks about empathy as involving, not only imagining the emotions of others, but also actually experiencing these emotions. These 'empathetic emotions' are described as experienced in response to someone else's situation and experienced as if from the perspective of this person (Nussbaum 1995, 66, 86f.). Although Nussbaum does not say this, it seems reasonable to assume that these emotions do not amount to emotional states.

person “because I imagine what it would be to have the beliefs and desires that I ascribe to” this person (ibid., 347), but in most places he simply speaks about imagining the other person’s emotion as if that entailed feeling a similar emotion off-line.

As I have said before, I find it unclear whether imagining an emotion does in fact entail feeling a similar emotion. I find it self-evident that it is possible to evoke emotions similar to those of another person by simulating having his beliefs and desires, or by imagining being in his situation. Furthermore, I also think that you can evoke certain emotions by imagining or forming some sort of mental picture of them, but I do not think that such acts of imagination necessarily lead to the corresponding feelings.

In view of this, and in view of my goal of developing an account of empathy according to which having empathy with respect to the emotion of another person entails actually feeling a similar emotion, I do not want to say that empathy requires imagining another person’s emotion. If imagining another person’s emotion is not sufficient for actually feeling an emotion of the kind imagined, then neither is it sufficient to say that having empathy with someone entails imagining his emotion.

However, by saying that empathy entails such acts of imagination, you also say that the latter are necessary for the former. This is the second problem mentioned above. On the view of empathy that I want to develop, imagining another person’s emotion is not the only way in which an emotion felt as part of having empathy with someone can be caused. On this view it is possible to acquire such an emotion by, for example, imitating the behavior of another person, and, since such imitation does not depend upon an act of imagining his emotion, neither does empathy.

For these reasons, I cannot say that having empathy with another person requires imagining his emotion. Instead I want to investigate the view that it requires actually feeling an emotion, albeit feeling it in a way that does not entail being in an emotional state. Such a view of empathy has been developed in the wake of the debate between simulation-theorists and theory-theorists, and it is to this view I now turn.

5.4 Empathy and Off-line Emotions

The idea that it is possible to experience an emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state was introduced into the current debate by Robert M. Gordon. The idea was first put forth in *The Structure of Emotions* (1987), and then later developed in the paper “Sympathy, Simulation, and the Impartial

Spectator” (1996). In both these works, Gordon characterized the special way of having these emotions by saying that they were “run ‘off-line’”. Today the emotions themselves are commonly referred to as “off-line emotions”.

In *The Structure of Emotions*, Gordon used the notion of off-line emotions, or “as if” emotions” as he then called them, to describe the view of empathy as a vicarious affective response (1987, 151f.). According to this view, having empathy with respect to another person’s emotion involves sharing and, in a sense, feeling his emotion. To have empathy with respect to, e.g., someone’s pride over having won a wrestling match involves picturing his situation from his point of view, and also experiencing pride from his point of view, but it does not involve becoming proud oneself: “in my vicarious affective response to the wrestler’s triumph I do not myself become proud but only ‘as if proud’” (1987, 152).

In order to make the notion of an “as if” emotion more comprehensible, Gordon then went on to say that we may suppose that “our emotion-producing system may be run off-line, disengaged from its natural input and output systems” (ibid.). What this meant with regard to the difference between “as if” emotions and ordinary emotions was further explained in the paper from 1996.

In this paper, Gordon introduces the notion of an off-line emotion when distinguishing between two kinds of emotional contagion or infection: ordinary and contained infection. Common to both kinds is a process wherein the feelings or emotions of one person are transferred to another person due to the latter’s imitation of the behavior of the former; a process called “facial empathy” when the behavior mimicked is the facial behavior the other (1996, 167).⁹

According to Gordon, there are two differences between ordinary and contained emotional contagion. One is that whereas contained infection requires that the infected person “refers” his emotion back to the person responsible for the infection, ordinary contagion does not require any such “referring” (Gordon 1996, 168, 175). This seems to mean not only that contained infection requires that the infected person knows that and by whom she has been infected, but also that she takes her emotion to be a second-hand copy of an emotion that this other person is feeling; in Gordon’s words, this emotion is “indexed” to this other person and marked as “part of [the infected person’s] representation of that individual” (1996, 168).

⁹ Gordon mentions in passing that there is some empirical support for the claim that there actually is such a process. A good presentation of this support can be found in Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson (1994).

The other difference between ordinary and contained emotional contagion could be described as a difference in the functional roles of the emotions that you feel as a result of having been infected. In ordinary emotional contagion these emotions play much the same role as “first-hand” emotions evoked in the “normal” way. In contained emotional contagion, however, the functional role is to a certain extent circumscribed.

Here is how Gordon describes ordinary emotional contagion:

[O]rdinary emotional contagion, of the sort to which even six-month-old infants are subject, transmits genuine, even if second-hand, emotion. When another person feels joy, embarrassment, grief, or the emotional aspects of physical pain, contagion gives us the same emotion, sometimes (as in social referencing) toward the same “object.” The second-hand emotion has the usual physiological manifestations, such as those mediated by the autonomic nervous system, just as if it had originated in us, and it affects our decisions and actions in the way “first-hand” emotions do. To mention only one biologically important example, a parent or caregiver, and sometimes even an unrelated bystander, will tend to be moved to relieve the infant’s pain, in the way that one’s own pain moves one to find relief (1996, 175f.).

As this last example shows, Gordon’s view on emotional contagion is not the same as Scheler’s. While both agree that infection is not incompatible with an awareness of the “source” of the infection, Scheler would no doubt claim that if a person has been infected with the pain of someone else, then she is more concerned about her own pain than about the pain of the other. Apparently this is not Gordon’s view.

I would not consider Gordon’s example as an example of emotional contagion. The reason for this is that, on my view, if a person has been infected with the emotion of someone else, then she will be motivated to act in exactly the same way as she would have been had she had the emotion under normal circumstances. That is, if I am infected with your fear, then I will primarily act as if I am in danger, and if I am infected with your suffering, then I will primarily act as if I am suffering. I will not primarily act as if you are in danger or in pain.

However, Gordon’s point is not that the infected person will act as if the other person is in danger or pain, rather than as if she herself is. His point is that ordinary emotional contagion has *some* effect on the behavior of the one infected. Here is where ordinary emotional contagion differs from contained emotional contagion:

If my account of the uses to which we put facial empathy is correct, then it is by a kind of “contained” emotional contagion that we recognize the emotional expressions of others. The emotion one “catches” from another gets referred to the

individual from whom one caught it and /.../ integrated with other information about the same individual. But it is not enough just to refer the emotion to its source; there must be a containing mechanism that segregates these emotions from those arising out of our own perceptions and memories. The mechanism must allow the former to affect the decisions we make in simulating the other but prevent them from affecting our own decisions and actions in the way our own “original” emotions would (1996, 175).

Contained emotional contagion is, thus, contained in the sense that the emotions felt are in some sense isolated or put off track. They do not have the same effect on our behavior as our normal “first-hand” or “original” emotions have. If, for example, I feel a contained fear, I do not have the same tendency to flee as I have when I feel fear under normal circumstances. Similarly, if I feel a contained anger I do not have a tendency to snap at people and treat them brusquely, as I surely do have when I am feeling “uncontained” or ordinary anger. In this sense, contained emotions are run off-line (*ibid.*, 168).

When distinguishing between ordinary and contained emotional contagion Gordon focuses mainly on cases where a person has acquired an emotion through mimicking someone else’s behavior. This is, however, not the only way a person can acquire an off-line emotion. Another way, Gordon says, is through imagining being in someone else’s situation, or, as it is now usually described, by simulating having another person’s beliefs and desires.

The notion of simulation belongs primarily to a debate concerning how to account for our ability to predict and explain the behavior of other people. I will not delve into this debate here. Suffice to say that, as opposed to the so-called theory-theorists, simulation-theorists, such as Robert Gordon and Alvin Goldman, have argued that in order to predict the behavior of other people, you do not have to have a theory, a folk psychology, about how the average person tends to react given that he has certain beliefs and desires. According to simulation-theorists it is also possible to arrive at such predictions through simulating his beliefs and desires, pretending that you have them, and then paying heed to what actions present themselves as viable given those beliefs and desires – as Roy A. Sorensen has put it, “in goes hypothetical beliefs and desires, out comes hypothetical actions and revised beliefs and desires” (Sorensen 1998, 75f.).¹⁰

However, simulation theory offers not only a way of accounting for our abilities to predict and explain the behavior of other people. By simulating the beliefs and desires of another person we can also evoke certain emotions in

¹⁰ For more on the debate between theory-theorists and simulation-theorists, see the papers in *Folk Psychology* (1995), *Mental Simulation* (1995) and *Theories of Theories of Mind* (1996).

ourselves. Thus, the notion of simulation can be used to explain certain instances of empathy. As we have already seen, this has been done by James Harold, but whereas he seems to regard simulation simply as a way of imagining someone's emotion, the theory, as presented by, e.g., Gordon, clearly offers another way of understanding empathy. Instead of identifying simulation with an act of imagining another person's emotion and then saying that empathy consists in this act of imagination, one could claim that empathy consists in actually having an affective experience similar to that of the other person, and that this experience can be brought about through simulating or imagining having his beliefs and desires. This is, I believe, how Gordon perceives the off-line emotions that a person feels as a result of simulation, and this is also the way in which Ian Ravenscroft (1998) seems to view the emotions that a person feels as part of having empathy with someone else.

In Ravenscroft's account the term 'empathy' is used to denote "the capacity to bring about in ourselves another's affective states without actually placing ourselves in their situation" (Ravenscroft 1998, 171). One way of doing this, and the one which Ravenscroft's paper focuses on, is by simulating another person's beliefs and desires. By performing such a simulation we can, according to him, come to empathize with this person; i.e., we can come to experience affective states similar to those he is experiencing.

When Ravenscroft speaks about the experiences which a person has as part of having empathy with someone, it is clear that he sees them as genuine affective experiences. They are not something that you only imagine, but something that you actually feel. However, and this is where the notion of off-line emotions comes into play, when we replicate another person's emotions in empathy, we do not usually replicate his behavior. Although we do feel a similar emotion to the one that this other person feels, this emotion does not affect our behavior in the way ordinary, "on-line" emotions do. Rather, it is generally run off-line (ibid., 173, 178f.).

I have no objections to this way of describing the emotions which we feel as part of having empathy with others. In fact, I believe that this notion of off-line emotions is the key to understanding how it is possible to feel, e.g., sadness or anger without actually being sad or angry. This line of thought will be further developed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL STATES

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will do three things: (1) develop at least a partial account of what it means to be in an emotional state; (2) give a partial account of what it means to have or feel compassion for another person; and (3) argue that it is possible to have the affective experiences characteristic of a certain type of emotional state without necessarily being in that kind of state.

Section 6.2 is devoted to emotional states. Here I give a general, albeit partial, account of what we mean when we say that someone is, e.g., sad, angry, afraid, or embarrassed. I will only consider a limited number of such states, and, in this section at least, I will only be concerned with giving a general account of these states; I will, in other words, not attempt to give specific characterizations of specific kinds of states.

One of the main claims of section 6.2 is that if a person is in a certain kind of emotional state, then this person (1) experiences certain feelings characteristic of that kind of state or has a tendency or disposition to experience such feelings, and (2) behaves in way characteristic of this kind of state or has a tendency or disposition to behave in such a way. If a person is, for example, angry, then he (1) feels angry or has a tendency or disposition to feel angry, and (2) behaves angrily or has a tendency or disposition to behave angrily. How this applies to other kinds of emotional states, and what it amounts to more specifically, will be explained in section 6.2.

In section 6.3 I give a more detailed account of one particular kind of emotional state, compassion. Compassion is often described in relation to empathy, and in this section I want to present my own view of the relationship between these two states. The main claim of this section is that, in order to understand compassion, we have to distinguish between being in an emotional state for one's own sake and being in an emotional state for someone else's sake. To have compassion for another person is, I claim, to be in an emotional state for this person's sake: it is to be sorry or sad for him.

In section 6.4, finally, I put forth my version of the claim that it is possible to experience an emotion off-line. Here I claim that it is possible to feel an emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state; or, more specifically, that it is possible to experience the feelings characteristic of a certain kind of emotional state, but without either behaving, or having a tendency or disposition to behave, in a way characteristic of that kind of state. I call this way of having or experiencing an emotion ‘merely feeling an emotion’, and I will later propose this as a way of understanding the emotions that we experience as part of having empathy with someone.

In sections 6.2 and 6.3 I attempt to articulate some aspects of our everyday concepts of emotions and emotional states. I try to do this by considering what follows from our ordinary ways of talking about these states. A consequence of this is that the claims I put forth in these sections are claims about the relations among different concepts. When I say, for example, that being in an emotional state implies or entails feeling, or having a tendency or disposition to feel, an emotion, what I mean is that our concept of an emotional state is such that a person would not count as being in such a state unless he were having this kind of feeling, tendency or disposition. What I claim is, in other words, that it is logically or conceptually necessary that if a person is in an emotional state, then he feels or has a tendency or disposition to feel an emotion. Although this kind of investigation cannot teach us anything new about the actual states that we use our emotion-words to refer to, I do think that it can provide us with important reminders of what we mean by those terms, and thereby also give us a better understanding of the phenomena that we use the terms to talk about.

6.2 Emotional States

In this section I want to give at least a partial answer to the question what we say when we say that someone is in an emotional state. By ‘being in an emotional state’ I here mean what people generally mean when they say that someone is angry, afraid, sad, embarrassed, etc.

In this section I will only consider a limited number of emotional states. Those that I will deal with are those which we ascribe to someone when we say that he is angry, ashamed, disappointed, embarrassed, fearful, glad, grateful, hopeful, indignant, proud, regretful, resentful, sad, thankful, or worried. When I henceforth make generalizations about emotional states – and nothing else is indicated – these are the kinds of states I am referring to. (In section 6.3 I will take up one further kind of emotional state, compassion.)

When considering our ordinary ways of talking about emotions and emotional states it seems natural to divide these into three groups. Sometimes we speak about someone simply being, e.g., angry, afraid, or sad. Sometimes we speak of someone as being glad *that* something happened, or hopeful *that* something will happen. And sometimes we say that someone is angry with someone or afraid of something. In all of these cases we ascribe to the person in question an emotional state. In the first case, we ascribe to him an emotional state plain and simple. In the second case, we ascribe to him a propositional emotional state. And in the third case, we ascribe to him what I will henceforth call an objectual emotional state. In what follows I will consider each of these different kinds of emotion-ascriptions in turn. I wish to point out that the account of emotional states that I put forth here, in particular, the account of propositional emotional states, draws heavily on the theory of emotions developed by Robert M. Gordon in *The Structure of Emotions* (1987).

Emotional states in general

To say of someone that he is in a certain kind of emotional state, be it an objectual state, a propositional state, or an emotional state plain and simple, is, in part, to say (1) that he has certain affective experiences characteristic of this kind of state or that he, at least, has a tendency or disposition to have such experiences, and (2) that he behaves in a way characteristic of this kind of state or that he at least has a tendency or disposition to behave in such a way.

Before I comment specifically on (1) and (2), I wish to clarify what I mean by having a tendency and having a disposition. Put shortly: If you have a tendency to feel or do something, then you will actually feel or do this unless there is something preventing you from feeling or doing it. If, on the other hand, you only have a disposition to feel or do something, then you will not actually feel or do this unless there is something that triggers you to feel or do it. For example, if someone is in the process of suppressing a feeling or behavior, then I will say that he has a tendency to feel or behave in a certain way, and that he is trying to prevent this tendency from being realized.

Let me now turn to the first part of the claim made above, the part that says that if you ascribe a certain kind of emotional state to someone, then you ascribe to him a certain kind affective experience, or at least a tendency or disposition to have such an experience. Another way of putting this, which I will use in the following, is to say that if a person is in a certain kind of emotional state, then he feels a certain emotion or has a tendency or disposition to feel a certain emotion.

For each kind of emotional state mentioned above, there is, I believe, a particular kind of affective experience associated with it. These affective experiences are different for different kinds of emotional states, and I also believe that we have the ability to separate and identify them simply by the way they feel. I will not make any attempt to describe these different experiences. In what follows, I will simply refer to them as the feelings of anger, fear, joy, embarrassment, and so on. When a person has the affective experiences characteristic of being angry, afraid, glad, etc., I will say that he feels anger, fear, joy, etc., and when a person has the affective experience characteristic of any emotional state, I will say that he feels an emotion. From now on, then, 'feeling an emotion' will be used in a different sense from 'being in an emotional state'.

That different kinds of feelings are associated with different kinds of emotional states does not mean that you have to feel an emotion in order to be in such a state. Actually feeling anger is not a necessary condition for being angry, and neither is actually feeling joy a necessary condition for being glad. Admittedly, when we say that someone is angry plain and simple, we often mean that he is currently experiencing feelings of anger and/or that he is currently exhibiting behavior indicative of anger. However, in those cases where we say that someone is angry with someone or about something, it is often not the case that we mean to say that he is currently experiencing such feelings. This is shown, for example, by the fact that we can say truthfully of someone who is fast asleep that he is angry with a certain person, even though the person sleeping is not experiencing any feelings at all.

This does not mean, however, that such feelings are in no way connected with emotional states. To see this, take for example someone who is angry with another person. He may be angry with this person because he believes that this person is a scoundrel. Now, believing that someone is a scoundrel is, of course, something one can do without being angry with this person. Consequently, there must be a difference between simply believing this about someone and being angry with someone because one believes this about him. In many cases, this difference will consist, at least partly, in the fact that the person who is angry also feels anger, whereas the person who is not angry does not. However, since there will also be cases where the person who is angry will not be feeling anger, the difference cannot consist only in this. In such cases, I think the difference is that the person who is angry, albeit not currently feeling anger, also has a tendency or disposition to feel anger (when, e.g., he thinks about this person), whereas the person who simply believes that someone is a scoundrel does not

have this tendency or disposition. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for all emotional states.

Let me now turn to the claims that different kinds of emotional states are associated with different kinds of affective experiences, and that it is possible to identify these experiences simply by the way they feel. Personally I find this if not obvious, at least very difficult to deny. There are, however, some who seem to have wanted to deny it. While some have said that many emotions, if not all, basically feel the same and that the only way we can tell them apart is by taking account of other factors, such as our concomitant thoughts and desires (Bedford 1956-57/1967, 78f.; Nussbaum 2001, 29f.), others have made the somewhat less extreme claim that different emotions do feel different, but that this difference is due, not to our basic arousal, but to our interpretation of this arousal in view of factors like the situation we take ourselves to be in, or what we take to be the cause of our arousal (Schachter and Singer 1962; Russell 1927/1979, 174f.).

To get clear on what exactly is at stake here, one must distinguish between two questions: (1) Is it possible to determine if one is in a certain kind of emotional state solely by the way one feels? and (2) is it possible to determine which kind of emotional state one would be in, were one in an emotional state, solely by the way one feels? Sometimes it can be hard to tell which of these questions a certain philosopher tries to answer. However, since most philosophers nowadays believe – as I do – that actual or occurrent feelings are neither necessary nor sufficient for emotional states, it is easy to say that most of them – as I do – answer at least (1) in the negative (see, e.g. Lyons 1980, 133 and Solomon 1993, 98). The only philosophers I have found who also seem to want to answer (2) in the negative are Errol Bedford (1956-57/1967, 78f.) and Marta C. Nussbaum (2001, 29f.). It is with this that I disagree.

In support for their claims Bedford and Nussbaum point to some examples. Bedford speaks about indignation and annoyance, and says that he is unable to find any “feeling, or class of feelings, that marks off indignation from annoyance” (1956-57/1967, 79). Judging from my own case, I am inclined to say that there is a difference between the feelings associated with indignation and annoyance, but I do not wish to hold that against Bedford. Suffice to say that even if he is correct in the case of indignation and annoyance, that does not show that there are no differences among the feelings associated with the emotional states mentioned in my list.

Nussbaum relies primarily on an example in which she was in a state of great agitation after receiving the news of her mother’s death. She claims that she was in a state of grief, but she also says that her feeling of agitation was not

sufficient to reveal to her that her state was one of grief, rather than, say, one of fear or pity (Nussbaum 2001, 29). I am not sure how general a conclusion Nussbaum wants to draw from this example. It does seem to me, however, as if the most one can say is that, in many cases, when you are this agitated, you cannot determine what kind of emotion you are feeling simply by inspecting your agitation. It does not show that you cannot do this in less extreme cases.

More, and what may seem to be better, support for the claim that different emotions do not feel different, comes from the famous experiments performed by Stanley Schachter and Jerome E. Singer in the 1960s, the results of which were published in the 1962 article “Cognitive, social, and psychological determinants of emotional state”. These experiments showed, among other things, that subjects who were unknowingly injected with adrenaline (epinephrine) interpreted the arousal and agitation caused by the drug as signs of different kinds of emotional states depending on the type of setting in which they found themselves. When answering an intrusive questionnaire in the presence of an actor behaving angrily, they interpreted their arousal as feelings of anger. When seated together with an actor behaving in a playful and silly manner, they interpreted the same arousal as feelings of joy and euphoria. (Persons who were not injected with the drug experienced neither anger nor joy when being placed in identical situations.)

These findings seem to give some support to the view that the basic, “uninterpreted” feeling of two so radically different states as anger and joy is in fact the same. However, in order to draw this conclusion, one must assume that the adrenaline used in the experiments had the power to elicit all the “uninterpreted” feeling that there is to anger and joy, i.e., that there is nothing more to the basic feelings of anger and joy than what was elicited by the drug. As we shall see in more detail in section 6.3, this is not likely to be true. Jon Elster has pointed out that there are other experiments, performed with other drugs, which indicate that there is a difference between the feelings of anger and joy even before you start to interpret these feelings in the light of other factors. This is also suggested by some experiments in which affective experiences have been evoked in people through electrical stimulation of their brains (Elster 1999, 248).¹

This concludes what I have to say about the claim that different kinds of emotional states are associated with different kinds of affective experiences. I

¹ Elster refers to Servan-Schreiber and Perlstein (1998) and Gloor (1986). The first paper was not yet published when Elster wrote, and the second paper was published in a different book than the one Elster cites in his bibliography. For the correct references, see my bibliography.

now turn to the claim that, for each kind of emotional state, there is also a characteristic behavior-pattern, such that if you are in a particular kind of state, then you behave in a certain way or, at least, have a tendency or disposition to behave in this way.

The word ‘behavior’ as it is here used is meant to cover a rather wide variety of overt human behavior. It is meant to include actions performed out of emotions, as well as more or less unintentional expressions of emotion, such as facial expressions, bodily postures and changes in tone of voice. I want to stress, however, that it is the actions or action-tendencies that I find important here. These are what I believe is lacking when you feel an emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state.

Some types of emotional states are clearly associated with different, characteristic types of expressions. Joy is associated with smiling and laughter, sadness with crying and a lowering of the corners of the mouth, and anger with frowning, clenched fists, and a raised voice. Even though the notion of an emotional expression is vague, and even though it is not clear that all emotional states have expressions that are as characteristic as these, I find it sufficiently clear to rest content with this.

What is more interesting are the actions and action-tendencies associated with different kinds of emotional states. Again, I find it clear that some kinds of states are associated with particular types of actions. If you are, for example, afraid, then you tend to try to protect yourself from harm, and if you are angry, then you tend to behave aggressively towards other people. Anger and fear are perhaps two of those states that are most clearly associated with different kinds of actions, but I believe that the same holds for all kinds of emotional states (at least, for all those that are mentioned in my list). Even a state such as sadness, which might not seem to be associated with any particular kind of behavior, is, I believe, characterized by a general tendency to withdraw from activities. Thus, being sad could be said to be characterized by the avoidance of performing certain actions and of engaging in certain activities.

This, then, is what I think we say of someone, when we say that he is in an emotional state. If you say that someone is, for example, angry, then you say, at least in part, that he (1) feels anger or has a tendency or disposition to feel anger, and that he (2) behaves angrily or has a tendency or disposition to behave angrily. Of course, saying that someone behaves angrily, sadly, gladly, etc., does not say much about how he behaves or what he does, but I think that we all have at least some idea of what behavior to expect from someone who is in these emotional states.

This said, there is yet another question we may ask: If you say that someone is in an emotional state plain and simple, e.g., that someone is angry, have you thereby also said that this person is in an emotional state that is directed towards some object or state of affairs; that is, have you thereby also said that the person who is angry is angry with someone or angry about something?

I am inclined to believe that the answer depends on what kind of emotional state you are talking about. If you are talking about, e.g., anger and fear, then I believe that you have not, but if you are talking about, e.g., embarrassment, then I believe you have. In other words, while it does seem to me to be impossible to be embarrassed without being embarrassed about something, I do not think that it is impossible to be angry without being angry with someone or about something. However, rather than arguing explicitly for these claims, I will now move straight to the intentional emotional states, and present an account of what we say when we do say that someone is in a propositional emotional state and in an objectual emotional state, respectively.

Propositional emotional states

By ‘propositional emotional states’ I mean states like being glad that the sun is shining, being angry that the train is late, and being afraid that the gun will go off. These are emotional states where the object of the state, i.e., what the state is directed towards or about, is described in a complete sentence.

To say that someone is in a propositional emotional state is to say something more than that he is in an emotional state plain and simple. If I say, for example, that someone is angry that the train is late, then I say, not only (1) that he feels anger or has a tendency or disposition to feel anger, and (2) that he behaves angrily or has a tendency or disposition to behave angrily; I also say (3) that he believes that the train is late, (4) that he wishes it not to be the case that the train is late,² and (5) that his anger is caused by his belief having frustrated his wish. Similar conditions apply for all the propositional emotional states that I discuss in this section.

Propositional emotional states presuppose beliefs. In order to be in this kind of state you have to believe something and you have to believe it in such a way that you hold it to be true. The sense in which I am using the word ‘believe’ should, in other words, be distinguished from the sense in which we use it when we say things like ‘I do not know if there is milk in the fridge, but I believe there is’ or ‘I believe she is coming, but I cannot say for certain’. When I use the

² This particular way of describing the wish is due to Robert M. Gordon (1987, 30f.).

words ‘believe’ and ‘belief’ I use them, not in the sense in which we use them when we want to make a sharp distinction between knowledge and belief, but rather in the way we use them when we say that knowledge that *p* implies a belief that *p*. In my usage, to say of someone that she believes that *p* is to say that she holds *p* to be true, not that she merely holds *p* to be likely, possible, or probable.

If a person is in a propositional emotional state, then there is at least one claim or statement that she believes or holds to be true. In the example given above, this is the statement that the train is late. Here the statement held to be true is the same as the statement used to express the object of the state, i.e., one both believes, and is angry, that the train is late. In the case of some types of emotional states, however, the statement held to be true and the statement describing the object of the state come apart. This is so in the case of being fearful, hopeful, or worried that something is or will be the case. If, for example, one is afraid that the ice will break, then one does not hold the statement that it will break to be true. If one did that, or if one held the opposite statement to be true, then there would be no room left for being afraid that it will break. In that case things would be settled, and there would only be room for sadness or anger, or, in the opposite case, joy or gratefulness.³

But even if one cannot simultaneously fear and believe that the ice will break, there is one statement which one must hold true if one is to be able to fear that this will happen. This is the statement that it is possible that the ice will break. If one did not believe that, one could not fear that the ice will break. Thus, if a person fears that *p*, then he or she believes that it is possible that *p*, but not that it is the case that *p* or that it is the case that not-*p*. The same goes for worrying that *p* and hoping that *p*.

³ There are some utterances that might be thought to be counterexamples to this claim, but that on closer inspection turn out not to be. One such utterance is ‘I am afraid that I am going to die’. Even though I am certain that I will die some day, this is no counterexample to the claim. If I say that I am afraid that I am going to die, I do not mean that I am afraid that I am going to die some day. What I mean is that I am afraid that I am going to die some time in the near future. Part of the explanation for why I am afraid is that I am not sure, i.e., believe, whether or when I am going to die in the near future. Another kind of spurious counterexample are utterances of the type ‘I am afraid that it is possible that *p*’, for example, ‘I am afraid that it is possible that it will rain’. Surely, it is possible to say this while believing that it is possible that it will rain. If, however, one says this, then one does not use the statement to say that one is in a state of fear. Instead, one uses it as a polite way of indicating that it probably will rain.

Believing that *p* is a necessary condition for being angry that *p*, but it is of course not a sufficient condition. One further condition is that one wishes that it is not the case that *p*. Wishes of this kind are necessary for a number of propositional emotional states. In order to be hopeful that *p* and glad that *p*, one has to wish that *p* or wish that it is the case that *p*. And in order to be worried that *p* or angry that *p*, one has to wish that not-*p*. There are, however, some states, which could be considered emotional states, but which do not presuppose wishes of this kind. One such example is surprise. To be surprised that *p*, one does not have to wish that *p* or that not-*p*. In this section, and in this whole chapter, however, I have limited myself to states that do require wishes of this kind.

Adding a wish that not-*p* to the belief that *p* still leaves us far away from a complete analysis of being angry that *p*. The problem is of course that it is far too easy to imagine a case in which a person believes that *p* and wishes that not-*p*, but in which he is nonetheless not angry that *p*. Another problem, which is perhaps a bit less obvious, is that it is also possible to imagine a case where a person both believes that *p*, wishes that not-*p*, and is also angry, but is still not angry *that p*. An example provided by Robert M. Gordon (1987, 47) makes this clear: Junior has opened Daddy's camera and ruined his irreplaceable photos of Hong Kong. Now Daddy is coming home angry that his car needs to be kept at the repair shop for another day. After learning that Junior has ruined his photos he will both believe that Junior has ruined the shots and he will most surely also wish that it is not the case that Junior has ruined the shots. He will also be angry, but since, initially at least, it is, as Gordon (1987, 47) points out, "a mere *coincidence*" that he is angry while having this belief and wish, he cannot be said to be angry that Junior has ruined the shots.

The problem is that Daddy's anger does not have the right connection with his belief and wish concerning Junior's ruining of the photos. Gordon's solution to this problem is to add the requirement that Daddy's belief and wish are sufficient causes of his anger, more specifically, that Daddy's anger is caused and sustained by the fact that Daddy's wish has been frustrated by his belief that Junior has ruined the shots. Hence, if Daddy is to be angry that Junior ruined the shots, Daddy's anger must be caused by his belief that Junior ruined the shots having frustrated his wish that Junior did not ruin the shots (Gordon 1987, 47f., 52f.).

Gordon later summarizes his claims about propositional anger in what he calls the Belief-Wish Condition (BWC) for anger. This condition states the following:

(BWC) If S is angry about the fact that p, then S believes that p and wishes it not to be the case that p; and the conjunction of

- (1) S's believing that p,
- (2) S's wishing it not to be the case that p, and
- (3) some other existing conditions

is sufficient for S to be angry – where no two of these three conjuncts are jointly sufficient for S to be angry (Gordon 1987, 53).

Here there is no mentioning of a belief and a wish causing a state of anger. I take it, however, that it is Gordon's view that the belief and wish that are mentioned in (1) and (2) are causes of "the other existing conditions" mentioned in (3). These other conditions are then taken to constitute the state of anger.

But what are these other conditions? On my view they are, as already mentioned, at least (i) a feeling of anger, or a tendency or disposition to have such a feeling, and (ii) an angry manner of behaving, or a tendency or disposition for such a manner of behaving. Gordon seems to agree with the latter part, at least to a certain extent. After discarding physiological arousal as a possible condition, he suggests that a certain action tendency is an important, if not an essential, part of being angry. In the case of anger, this action tendency is roughly described as "one aimed against the interests or self-esteem of the agent one takes to be responsible for whatever it is one is angry *about* – with allowances, however, for repression or displacement" (Gordon 1987, 57f.). I take it that Gordon thinks that there are other equally distinctive action tendencies associated with other kinds of emotions.

Now, Gordon claims only that the Belief-Wish Condition – with the appropriate amendments – holds for what he calls the *factive* emotions (1987, 53f.). By this he means emotions such as anger that p, sadness that p, and gladness that p, i.e., emotions that I have said presuppose the belief that p. Concerning emotions such as worry and fear that p, which Gordon calls *epistemic* emotions, and which I have said presuppose a belief that it is possible that p, and the absence of a belief that p or that not-p, Gordon is silent. Personally, however, I can see no reason why BWC – with further amendments – should not apply to them also. Thus, I hold that if a person, S, is afraid that p, then the conjunction of (1) S's believing that it is possible that p, (2) S's wishing that it is not the case that p, and (3) some other existing conditions, is sufficient for S to be afraid, where no two of these three conjuncts are jointly sufficient for S to be afraid. In the case of fear that p, I also hold that the belief that it is possible that p, and the wish that not-p, are causes of the fear.

However, in the case of these epistemic emotions, one cannot say that the emotional state is caused by an actual wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration; a belief that it is possible that *p* can neither satisfy a wish that *p* nor frustrate a wish that not-*p*. What causes the emotional state in these cases, rather, is the belief that it is possible that *p*, or, stronger, the belief that *p* will or may turn out to be the case, where the belief that it being the case that *p* is sufficient to satisfy or frustrate one of one's wishes. Borrowing a term from Richard Wollheim (1999), I call these cases 'anticipated wish-satisfaction' and 'anticipated wish-frustration'. I wish to stress that these expressions should not be taken to imply that epistemic emotional states are caused by the belief that a wish may come to be satisfied or frustrated. What I mean is that these states are caused by the anticipation that something is or may be the case, where this something is such that it goes with or against one of one's wishes. In other words, one does not have to entertain the belief that a possible state of affairs has the power to satisfy or frustrate one's wishes, or that it will do so if it becomes actual; what is important is that one perceives this state of affairs to be possible, and that this state of affairs – or, rather, the belief that this state of affairs obtains – has the power to satisfy or frustrate one of one's wishes.

Besides presupposing causally active beliefs and wishes, emotional states also presuppose feelings, if not actual feelings or tendencies towards feelings, at least dispositions for feelings. Thus, in order to be angry that *p*, one does not have to feel angry or be in the process of suppressing feelings of anger. What is necessary, however, is that one has a disposition to feel angry. Hence, in order to be angry that Paul left the gate open, it is not enough to believe that he did so and to wish that he had not. One also has to be disposed to feel angry when thinking about Paul and the gate. In general, if a person is in a propositional emotional state, then he has a disposition to experience the feeling characteristic of this state whenever he thinks about the state of affairs that is the object of this state.

Objectual emotional states

By 'objectual emotional states' I mean emotional states that are said to be directed towards things or persons, rather than towards states of affairs. Being afraid of a dog is an objectual emotional state, as is being angry and being disappointed with someone.

Of the kinds of emotional states that I am considering in this section, only some can occur as objectual emotional states; that is, in ordinary language, only some of the words we use to denote these states can be used in sentences where

the object of the state is described with a noun or a personal pronoun, instead of with a complete sentence. These states are: being angry, ashamed, disappointed, embarrassed, fearful, indignant, proud, and worried.

Robert Gordon has claimed that when it comes to some kinds of emotional states, it is impossible to be in an objectual emotional state of that kind, without at the same time being in a propositional emotional state of the same kind. For example, Gordon claims that a person cannot be afraid of something unless there is a state of affairs involving this something that is such that this person is afraid that it is or will be the case (Gordon 1987, 67f.). In fact, he even goes as far as saying that he believes “that all fearing is ‘propositional,’ that all fears are fears that something is (or: was, will be) the case” (ibid., 67).

Contrary to Gordon, I think that it is possible to be afraid without being afraid of something, or afraid that something is or will be the case. I do believe, however, that Gordon is correct in his claim that being in a state of objectual fear implies being in a state of propositional fear. In fact, I am even willing to claim that for each type of objectual emotional state mentioned above, there is a sense in which being in an objectual emotional state of one of those types implies being in a propositional emotional state of the same type. If you are, for example, disappointed with someone, then you are disappointed that something has happened that involves this person, and if you are proud of someone, then you are proud that this person has done something laudable. Similar conditions apply for each type of objectual emotional state mentioned above.

I wish to stress that what I am saying is only that *there is a sense* in which being in an objectual emotional state of a certain type implies being in a propositional emotional state of the same type. I do not want to deny that people sometimes say that someone is, e.g., angry with someone even in cases where it is not true that he is angry that this person has done something undesirable, nor do I wish to deny that people can and often do say that someone is afraid of, e.g., a dog, even in situations where it is clear that this person is not afraid that this particular dog will harm him in any way (cf. Greenspan 1988, 17f.).

I do think, however, that there is a sense in which a person cannot be said to be, e.g., angry with someone unless he really is angry that this person has done something undesirable. Take for example Gordon’s case with Junior and Daddy. When Daddy comes home angry that his car needs to be kept at the repair shop for another day, it is possible – even before he learns that Junior has ruined his Hong Kong-pictures – that he starts to behave aggressively towards Junior. In that case, even though Daddy acts like he is angry with Junior, and even though someone, e.g., Junior, might want to say that he is angry with him, there is a

sense in which it does not seem true to say this about Daddy. When Daddy settles down he may realize that the reason why he was acting aggressively towards Junior was not because Junior had done something wrong or undesirable, but only because his car needed to be kept at the repair shop for another day. He was angry about this and he might also have been angry with the mechanic who was responsible for his car, but he was not angry with Junior. He was taking his anger out on Junior, but he was not angry with him.

What this example shows is that there is a sense in which a person cannot be said to be angry with someone, unless his anger is caused by a belief that somehow involves this person. To be angry with someone in this sense, you have to be angry that something is the case, and you also have to believe that this person is in some way responsible for this unfortunate state of events. In other words, your anger has to be caused by a belief, involving this person, having frustrated one of your wishes.

Similar examples can also be given for the other types of objectual emotional states mentioned above. There is a sense in which a person cannot be said to be actually or genuinely afraid, ashamed, disappointed, etc., of someone or something unless he is, at the same time, afraid, ashamed, disappointed, etc., that something is or may come to be the case in which this someone or this something is involved. In this sense, then, being in an objectual state of a certain type implies being in a propositional emotional state of a similar type. Consequently, being in an objectual emotional state implies being in an emotional state that is caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration. If Daddy is angry with Junior, then it follows that Daddy (1) feels anger or has a tendency or disposition to feel anger, (2) behaves angrily or has a tendency or disposition to behave angrily, (3) believes that something, *p*, is the case, and believes that Junior is in some way responsible for *p*, (4) wishes that *p* was not the case, and (5) is angry because his belief that *p* has frustrated his wish that not-*p*.

To conclude this section, I wish to point out one thing concerning the possible causes of the emotional states. What I have said so far is that, for a person to be in an objectual or propositional emotional state, it is necessary that his emotional state is caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration. For a person to be angry that something is the case, his anger must be caused by an actual wish-frustration; and for a person to be hopeful that something will happen, her hopefulness must be caused by an anticipated wish-satisfaction.

What I do not want to claim, however, is that an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration is the only possible cause of an emotional state. On the contrary, for at least some types of emotional states, I believe that it is possible for a person to be in them, or to be in states sufficiently similar to them for it to be reasonable to call them emotional states, without being in a propositional or objectual state. I also believe that when a person is in such an emotional state plain and simple, then it is possible that his state is not caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration. So, for example, I think it is possible for a person both to feel sad and to behave or have a tendency to behave in a way characteristic of sadness, without necessarily being sad about anything, and I also think that such a state of sadness does not have to be caused by an actual wish-frustration.

This is an empirical claim, and I will here not make much of an attempt to prove it. One phenomenon, however, which I think demonstrates it, is emotional contagion. When, for example, you walk into a room filled with people who are laughing and cheering, it can happen that you soon find yourself to be just as merry and cheerful as they are. In such cases, I believe, it is often reasonable to describe you as being glad, i.e., as being in an emotional state, but it does not seem accurate to say that you are glad because a wish of yours has become satisfied. In these cases, you are glad simply because the people around you are glad.

Other examples of emotional states that are not caused by an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration will be hinted at in section 6.4. Before I turn to that, however, I want to give a more detailed account of one particular kind of emotional state, viz. compassion.

6.3 *Compassion*

Compassion, or pity, is often described in relation to empathy. As we saw in Part 1, many philosophers have wanted to identify compassion with a state of sharing another person's suffering, and many have also attempted to explain the emergence of this state in terms of processes that are characteristic of empathy.

Today it is generally held that compassion is not identical with empathy. There are a few philosophers who claim that some form of empathy is a necessary condition for compassion,⁴ but, as far as I know, there are none who claim that it is also a sufficient condition for compassion. According to most contemporary philosophers, compassion is a particular kind of emotion which

⁴ See, e.g., Chismar (1988, 258), Piper (1991, 743), and Blum (1994b, 176).

essentially involves a concern for the person towards whom it is directed. Empathy, on the other hand, is not viewed as an emotion, and usually it is not taken to entail concern.⁵

The purpose of this section is to show that compassion is an emotional state, but that it is a state that differs from the ones I have already discussed. In order to understand compassion and especially in order to understand the sadness or suffering that we experience as part of feeling it, we have to distinguish between being in an emotional state for one's own sake, and being in an emotional state for someone else's. To feel compassion for another person is, I argue, to be in a state of sadness or suffering for this person's sake.⁶

The term 'compassion' literally means to 'suffer with'. In many cases, this is also how compassion is described. To feel compassion for another person, it is often said, is to "suffer with" this person (see, e.g., Blum 1994b, 179; Snow 1991, 196). While I think there is some truth to such a characterization, I also think that it can sometimes be misleading.

The truth is that compassion is associated with feelings of sadness and suffering. In order to feel compassion for someone, you cannot simply believe that he is in a state of sadness or suffering. You also have to feel sadness, or at least have a tendency or disposition to feel sadness.

The problem with speaking about compassion in terms of sadness and suffering, however, is that this can lead you into thinking that a person has to be sad or be suffering in order to feel it. As both Schopenhauer and Scheler have pointed out, however, this is not true. Suffering and sadness are states that are associated with feeling sorry for oneself and trying to relieve one's suffering. Feeling compassion for another person, however, is not associated with any such behavior. When you feel compassion (and only compassion) for someone, you do not have a tendency or disposition to feel sorry for yourself or to try to rid yourself of your feelings. Hence, feeling compassion does not entail being in a state of sadness or suffering, at least not in this sense.

The fact that there are nevertheless certain feelings of sadness associated with compassion leaves us with the problem of describing what kind of feelings these are. One possible answer is to describe them as empathetic emotions, i.e., as emotions that the compassionate person is experiencing as part of having

⁵ For this view on the difference between empathy and compassion/sympathy, see Chismar (1988), Piper (1991), Blum (1994b), Darwall (1998), Goldie (2000), Snow (2000), and Nussbaum (2001).

⁶ Throughout this section I will only consider states of compassion that are directed towards people other than oneself. This is not to deny that it is possible to pity oneself.

empathy with the other person. Assuming that empathetic emotions are experienced in a way that does not entail being in the corresponding emotional state, this could explain how the compassionate person can feel sadness without being sad.

The problem with this answer, however, is that it presupposes that empathetic sadness is a necessary condition for compassion. There are some philosophers who have claimed this, but it does not seem to be true. As has been pointed out by both Goldie (2000, 216) and Nussbaum (2001, 330), it is possible to feel compassion for a person, or for that matter an animal, also in cases where you cannot share or even imagine his, or its, experience. Hence, compassion cannot be constituted by empathetic sadness or empathetic suffering.

The correct answer to the problem, I believe, is that compassion does consist in a state of sadness or suffering, but that it is a special kind of state. Stephen Darwall's analysis of sympathy points in the right direction. According to Darwall, feeling sympathy for another person involves desiring his good *for his sake*. When we feel sympathy for someone in distress, we do not simply wish that his distress were alleviated, we wish it for his sake (Darwall 1998, 274f.).

The same holds for compassion. If you feel compassion for someone who suffers, then you wish for his sake that he did not suffer; you feel compassion for him because you believe that he suffers and because you wish for his sake that he did not. The fact that compassion is caused by the frustration of a wish for another person's sake also explains the nature of the sadness or suffering that you experience as part of feeling compassion. Since the wish is a wish for his sake, the sadness that you feel is a sadness for his sake. Thus, feeling compassion for another person involves suffering or being sad for this person's sake.

In order to clarify this further, we must distinguish between being in an emotional state for one's own sake as opposed to being in such a state for someone else's sake. The former state is caused by an actual or anticipated frustration or satisfaction of a wish for one's own sake; the latter is a state caused by a similar frustration or satisfaction of a wish for someone else's sake.

Another difference, and in this context a more important one, is that these states are also associated with different kinds of actions and action-tendencies. If you are in an emotional state for your own sake, then you tend to perform actions that are directed towards yourself and your own benefit, whereas if you are in a similar kind of state for someone else's sake, then you exhibit actions and tendencies towards actions that are directed towards the benefit of this other person. Thus, if you are, for instance, afraid about something for your own sake,

then you tend to act for the purpose of preventing yourself from coming to harm, and if you are afraid about something for someone else's sake, then you have a tendency or disposition to act for the purpose of preventing this person from coming to harm. In short, being in an emotional state for someone else's sake is associated with acting for the sake of this person, whereas being in an emotional state for your own sake is associated with acting for your own sake.

If we now return to compassion, it becomes clear that feeling compassion for another person is not associated with acting or behaving for one's own sake. This is also part of the explanation for why it feels wrong to say that a person who feels compassion suffers or is sad. When it is said of someone that he suffers or that he is sad, then, unless the context indicates otherwise, we naturally assume that he suffers or is sad for his own sake. However, since the behavior that is characteristic of these states is not characteristic of compassion, being in the latter state cannot entail being in any of the former states.

The kind of behavior characteristic of compassion, of course, aims towards the benefit of the person for whom one feels it. Thus, feeling compassion for another person entails acting or having a tendency or disposition to act for this person's sake. Since this is exactly the kind of behavior that is associated with suffering or being sad for another person's sake, this shows that this is the kind of suffering or sadness that we experience as part of feeling compassion. Hence, compassion involves believing that another person is suffering, and being in a state of sadness or suffering for this person's sake.

6.4 Merely Feeling an Emotion

I now turn to the third and final task of this chapter, which is to show how a person can feel an emotion without at the same time being in the corresponding emotional state. I call this to 'merely feel an emotion', and I will show that a person can do this by way of having the affective experiences that are characteristic of a certain type of emotional state, but without at the same time having a tendency or disposition to act or behave in a way characteristic of that state.

In order to show that this is possible I will present three different kinds of examples. The first two are somewhat extreme in that they involve the production of a feeling by means of, in the one case, electrical stimulation of a person's brain, and, in the other case, the use of a certain drug. Although these examples might seem extreme, I nevertheless think that they are good at showing both that it is possible to merely feel an emotion, and that it is possible to identify an affective experience simply by the way it feels. The third kind of

example, finally, is more mundane. It consists in the suggestion that, in most cases, when you feel an emotion as a result of having imagined yourself in a particular situation, then you do in fact merely feel this emotion.⁷

The first set of examples comes from the study of people with temporal lobe epilepsy. Apparently, people suffering from this kind of epilepsy often experience different kinds of emotions at the beginning of a seizure. Most often they experience fear, but there are also reports of feelings of anger, disgust, guilt, depression, sadness, and loneliness (Gloor 1992, 515).

Studies of these patients have shown that the kind of feelings that they experience in connection with seizures can also be elicited by electrical stimulation of the brain, or, to be more specific, by stimulation of the amygdala and its immediate vicinity. As shown in this quotation, these feelings can be quite specific:

Upon stimulating his left amygdala at 1 mA, he had a feeling “as if I were not belonging there,” which he likened to being at a party and not being welcome. ... Right hippocampal stimulation at 3 mA induced anxiety and guilt, “like you are demanding to hand in a report that was due 2 weeks ago ... as if I were guilty of some form of tardiness.” (Gloor 1986, 164)

Judging from the patient’s statements, he is experiencing very specific emotions. Judging from the author’s description of the experiments, he is also able to recognize them simply by the way they feel. Even though he describes his feelings by describing the situations in which they are appropriate, there is no suggestion that he identifies and recognizes them through any considerations about the thoughts he is having or the situations that he takes himself to be in. Rather, it seems as if he is merely giving honest and immediate reports about what he is feeling.

Admittedly, it is not entirely clear whether this patient is merely feeling emotions or whether he is actually in the corresponding emotional states. Given the peculiar circumstances in which he is having his experiences, I take it that it is most likely that he is merely feeling the emotions. Nevertheless, one could easily imagine that these experiences call up memories of past situations and transgressions which are still troubling for him and which might be able to put him in real emotional states.

A better example in this respect is the following. The patient is the same.

⁷ Towards the end of the section I briefly consider two other kinds of examples in which a person might possibly be said to merely feel an emotion. One of these concerns the currently debated issue of our emotional responses to works of fiction.

Stimulation /.../ with 2 mA caused the patient to say: “Yep, yep, yep, I am balancing on the edge of a fountain. I have often experienced this in ‘petit mals.’ It is like I am in an old storybook. I am afraid to fall into the fountain.” He smiled. When asked why he did so while claiming to be afraid, he said “because I have experienced this so often.” (Gloor, Olivier, Quesney, Andermann and Horowitz 1982, 136)

Here the patient is merely feeling fear. Even though he has the experience of being in a setting where fear is appropriate, and even though he himself says that he is afraid, his smile reveals that he is not. In my terminology, he is feeling fear without being afraid.

Before moving on to my second set of examples I would like to add a bit of speculation as to what it would be like to have emotions evoked in this way. This might also give a suggestion as to how one can arrive at the idea that different emotions do not feel different. My guess is that what the patients in these experiments go through is something like the experience you have when you smell, for example, an eraser and find that it smells exactly like strawberry. This sort of experience can be surprising in two ways. First, you do not normally expect an eraser to smell like strawberry, i.e., you do not expect to experience this smell so out of context. Second, if you have not really sniffed strawberries before you can be surprised to find that there really is a specific smell to them. If your only experience of the smell comes from picking, plucking, and eating strawberries, you may perhaps not have taken the time to notice it. Surely you have experienced the smell as a part of this picking-plucking-and-eating experience (this is shown, if not otherwise, by the fact that you can recognize it immediately when you experience it out of context), but it might be that you have not really paid attention to it, something which in turn might make it difficult for you to recall and bring to mind the specific smell of strawberry. When, however, you come across the smell out of your normal picking-plucking-and-eating context, then you can recognize it and, for the first time, notice that there really is a specific smell to strawberries.

Something similar can happen, I think, in these experiments. First, the patients are surprised to find that they are suddenly experiencing feelings of, e.g., being unwelcome or guilty; especially as there are no obvious reasons for them to feel this way. Second, they can be surprised to find that these feelings, which in a way are so familiar, can be so succinct and specific. Part of the explanation of this second surprise could be that, normally, when you are feeling unwelcome or guilty, you are more anxious about the way those around you are looking at you, or about finding ways to make amends, than about noticing the feeling of being unwelcome or guilty. This might make it difficult for you to

recall and bring to mind the specific feeling of being unwelcome or guilty, and this, in turn, could make you doubt that there really is a specific feeling associated with these states. When, however, you experience the feelings out of context, as these patients do, then there is a kind of “*Verfremdungseffekt*” which makes it possible for you to notice and pay attention to the feelings. You recognize them, and, for the first time maybe, you realize that they really are quite specific.

My next set of examples of people who are merely feeling emotions comes from a series of experiments performed by David Servan-Schreiber and William M. Perlstein (1998). In these experiments subjects were injected with a drug called procaine hydrochloride, a drug which, apparently, stimulates the same parts of the brain that were electrically stimulated by Gloor and his colleagues in the experiments referred to previously, i.e., the amygdala and its immediate vicinity, or the limbic system, as it is sometimes also called (Servan-Schreiber and Perlstein 1998, 335).

Interestingly, the effects of the procaine injections were closely similar to the effects of the electrical stimulations:

[s]ubjects reported a range of affective experiences, including euphoria, sadness, fear, and anxiety. The nature and range of reported experiences is strikingly similar to those experienced during the aural phase of temporal lobe epilepsy, and in epilepsy patients during intracranial stimulation of limbic structures /.../. As in the reports of such patients, in whom abnormal and random electrical activity in limbic and paralimbic regions is presumed to cause psychosensory and affective experiences, the experiences of our subjects were described as free-floating, seemingly detached from any particular external event, or from conscious thought. In the majority of cases, subjects were unable to associate a particular meaning to their affective experience or to explain it in terms of their present situation or recent mood states (Servan-Schreiber and Perlstein 1998, 345).

Unfortunately Servan-Schreiber and Perlstein do not give any more detailed descriptions of the effects. Judging from this description, however, it is most likely that the patients in these experiments, like those in the experiments performed by Gloor and his colleagues, are merely feeling emotions. Given the peculiar circumstances in which the emotions are evoked it is not likely that the patients are put in full-fledged emotional states. Still they are perfectly able to name and identify what they are feeling.

According to Servan-Schreiber and Perlstein, the patients were able to identify their emotions without the help of any external clues. This of course does not mean that the patients would not have interpreted their emotions differently if the settings had been varied, like they were in the experiments by Schachter and Singer. Even so, Servan-Schreiber and Perlstein do make the

claim that procaine-induced experiences, in contradistinction to experiences induced by adrenaline or epinephrine,

seem related to the essential “qualia” of some emotional states such as euphoria and fear. Subjects are able to describe unambiguously their experience, yet they cannot report cognitions or environmental clues that could have evoked this affect, nor can they justify their experience *a posteriori* (ibid., 347).

In support of the claim that procaine and epinephrine induce different kinds of experiences, the authors also point to the fact that the drugs work in different ways:

[E]pinephrine primarily induces peripheral arousal because it does not cross the blood-brain barrier. Its effect on mood is presumed to occur through cognitive attributions that subjects make when noticing heightened peripheral arousal. In the case of procaine, the drug is rapidly absorbed across the blood-brain barrier and directly induces an increase in electrical activity in limbic and paralimbic structures. The effect on mood is clearly more than that of attribution (ibid., 346f.)

If these somewhat extreme examples make it likely both that it is possible to identify different emotions simply by the way they feel and that it is possible to merely feel an emotion, we can now ask whether there are more ordinary cases in which a person can be said to merely feel an emotion. I will suggest one kind of case, and for that I return to Adam Smith.

As we saw in Part 1, Smith claimed that if one feels an emotion as a result of having imagined being in someone else’s situation, then this imaginative act can affect the emotion in such a way that it “not only lowers it in degree, but, in some measure, varies it in kind, and gives it a quite different modification” (TMS, 1.1.4.7, 22). The contrast Smith has in mind is, I think, the contrast between feeling an emotion as a result of having imagined being in the situation of someone else, and feeling an emotion as a result of actually being or believing oneself to be in the same situation as someone else. Thus, if a person feels fear as a result of having imagined being in a dangerous situation, then, according to Smith, her fear will be qualitatively different from the fear she would experience as a result of believing that she was in a dangerous situation.

Taken as a general claim about the necessary relations between different kinds of emotions and different kinds of cognitive acts, this claim is most certainly false. Surely, fear caused by an imaginative act would be exactly like fear caused by a belief, if the person in question was not aware that she felt fear as a result of having imagined being in a dangerous situation. Furthermore, even if fear caused by an imaginative act is generally experienced differently from fear caused by a belief, it does not seem entirely clear that fear caused by a

belief cannot be experienced in the same way that fear caused by an imaginative act is generally experienced.

Taken with these caveats, however, I believe that Smith's claim is perfectly correct. It is possible to evoke an emotion through imagining being in a certain situation, and it is not only possible, but in some circumstances also likely, that an emotion evoked in this way is qualitatively different from an emotion evoked through a belief that one is in the same situation.

As for this difference, part of it seems to consist in the fact that when you feel an emotion as a result of believing yourself to be in a certain situation, then you do not only feel the emotion, but you also behave, or at least have a tendency or a disposition to behave, in a way characteristic of the corresponding emotional state. If, on the other hand, you experience the emotion as a result of having imagined being in the same situation, then you are not likely to exemplify either this behavior or this tendency or disposition. For example, if you feel fear as a result of believing yourself to be in a dangerous situation, then you are likely to behave fearfully or have a tendency or disposition to behave fearfully. If, on the other hand, you feel fear as a result of having imagined being in a fearful situation (and you are aware that this is why you feel fear), then you are not likely either to behave fearfully or to have a tendency or disposition to behave fearfully.

In other words, if you feel an emotion as a result of believing yourself to be in a certain situation, then you are likely to be in an emotional state; whereas if you feel an emotion as a result of having imagined being in a certain situation, and you are aware that this is why you feel the way you do, then you are likely to merely feel the emotion.

These are the three types of examples I want to point to in support of the claim that it is possible to feel an emotion without being in the corresponding emotional state. Before I close the section, however, I would like to mention two other examples in which a person could possibly be said to do this. The first comes from a claim made by Michael Tye in his book *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (1995). Tye points to an experiment performed by Paul Ekman in which people were made to feel certain emotions through mimicking the facial expressions associated with them. Although unaware that they in fact had adopted the expressions of different emotions, when asked about how they felt, the subjects reported feeling "qualified emotions, corresponding to the facial expressions. For example, subjects asked to generate an angry look (without

realizing at the time what they were doing) reported feeling something like anger without *really* being angry” (Tye 1995, 127).⁸

The second kind of example comes from the debate around the so-called paradox of fiction in aesthetics and the philosophy of aesthetics. This discussion is centered around the question as to the nature of the emotions that we feel when we read novels and watch plays and fictional films. While some have said that these are not real emotions, but emotions of a particular kind (see in particular Kendall Walton, e.g., Walton 1997), others have said that they are no different from the emotions we experience in and towards real life situations. Without taking a stand in this debate, I think it is safe to say that in some cases when we experience emotions in response to fiction, we are merely feeling them.

With this I end the section about the act or state of merely feeling an emotion. I have tried to explain what it means to merely feel an emotion, and I have presented three sets of cases in which a person can be said to do this. As these examples show, it is possible to merely feel an emotion. As the last set of examples shows, there is also at least one familiar way of bringing this state about. Thus, while all of the examples show that a concept of empathy which requires that the empathizer is merely feeling an emotion might not be an empty concept, the last set of examples also suggests a familiar way in which this kind of empathy might be brought about.

⁸ Tye here refers to Ekman (1992). In this paper, however, Ekman does not say that the subjects described themselves as feeling angry without being angry.

CHAPTER 7

A DEFINITION OF 'EMPATHY'

7.1 Introduction

Based on the discussions in my earlier chapters, I now propose the following definition of 'empathy':

A person, S, has empathy with another person, O, with respect to an emotional state of the type E, if and only if

- (1) O is in an emotional state, e, of the type E,
- (2) S merely feels an emotion, e*, of the type E,
- (3) S merely feels e* because (a) S has been exposed to an expression of e, or (b) S has entertained an idea of the situation of O, or (c) S has entertained an idea of e,
- (4) it is not the case that S merely feels e* because of an actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration, and
- (5) S knows that O is in the emotional state e.

In this chapter I will explain the definition and demonstrate its main benefits. Since the definition to a large extent builds on the one proposed by Nancy Snow, I will also show how it steers clear of the objections that I raised against her definition.

But first two short remarks concerning the nature and scope of the proposed definition. To begin with, it should be noted that the definition is not an attempt to answer the questions what empathy is, what the word 'empathy' should be used to refer to, or what people generally mean by 'empathy'. Instead, it is an attempt to specify the notion of empathy as emotional sharing. That is, it seeks to give a clear and coherent statement of a notion of empathy that comprises three of the most commonly found ideas in the contemporary philosophical literature on empathy: (i) that having empathy with respect to another's emotion requires feeling or experiencing an emotion that is similar to this person's

emotion; (ii) that the emotion that a person feels or experiences as part of having empathy must be caused in a special way; and (iii) that this emotion also must be felt or experienced in a special way. My definition specifies one particular version of this notion according to which condition (3) entails, not simply imagining feeling an emotion, but actually feeling one, albeit feeling it in a way that does not involve being in the corresponding emotional state.

The second thing I want to point out concerns the scope of the definition. My definition attempts to articulate a particular notion of empathy with respect to the *emotional states* of other people. Thus, not only will I not consider empathy with respect to mental states other than emotions, I will also disregard possible cases of empathy with respect to emotions that are merely felt. Although it is coherent to speak of having empathy with someone with respect to an emotion that he merely feels, I nevertheless believe that it is empathy with respect to emotional states that is of most interest.

7.2 Type Similarity

According to conditions (1) and (2) of my definition, if a person, S, has empathy with another person, O, with respect to an emotional state of the type E, then it follows (1) that O is in an emotional state of the type E, and (2) that S is merely feeling an emotion of the same type E. Empathy with respect to an emotional state of a certain type thus requires merely feeling an emotion of the same type, or, to put it somewhat differently, merely feeling an emotion that is, in some respect(s), similar to the emotional state of another person.

In what follows, I will focus on the two respects that are the most interesting in this context: qualitative kind, and intentional object.¹ My claims are: (a) that having empathy with someone with respect to a state of a certain qualitative kind requires merely feeling an emotion of the same kind, and (b) that having

¹ A third respect in which emotions may differ from or resemble each other is with respect to their force, vivacity or strength. In the literature on empathy, it is often claimed that when a person feels an emotion as part of having empathy with someone, then her emotion is less strong than the other person's emotion. I am inclined to believe that this is true in most cases. I want to point out, however, that my view is incompatible with claiming that this has to be true in all cases. My view does not exclude the possibility of having empathy with somebody who is in an emotional state but who is not currently feeling anything at all. However, even in those situations in which the empathizer has an emotional experience, I do not think that it is essential that this experience should be stronger or more vivid than the empathizer's experience. In most situations it probably is, but it does not have to be. What is important is that the empathizer merely feels her emotion, not that her feeling is less strong or less vivid than the feeling of the empathizer.

empathy with someone with respect to a state that is directed towards a particular object requires merely feeling an emotion directed towards the same object. Let me explain these claims more fully.

By sameness or difference with respect to qualitative kind, I mean what we generally mean when we say that two emotions are of the same or a different kind. Two persons who are angry are in emotional states of the same qualitative kind, whereas one who is glad and one who is disappointed are in emotional states of different kinds.

To say that empathy with respect to an emotional state of a certain qualitative kind requires merely feeling an emotion of the same kind is, in other words, to say that if you have empathy with respect to another person's anger, then you have to merely feel anger, and if you have empathy with respect to the fear of another person, then you have to merely feel fear. Put more specifically, this means that in order to have empathy with someone with respect to an emotional state of a certain kind, you must have the affective experience characteristic of that kind of state. This, I take it, is neither controversial nor problematic.

It is slightly more problematic to claim that empathy with respect to a state that is directed towards a particular object requires merely feeling an emotion directed towards the same object. Although I take it to be uncontroversial that empathy with respect to such a state does require this, it is not entirely clear what it means to merely feel an emotion towards a particular object. If there is to be any point at all in speaking about having empathy with respect to, say, another person's fear of a certain dog (and not simply with respect to his fear), then one has to claim that this requires merely feeling fear directed towards the same dog. However, since merely feeling fear is not the same thing as being afraid, it is clear that if you are experiencing this kind of fear towards a certain dog, then you and/or your emotion cannot be directed towards this dog in the same way as when you are afraid of it. Hence, if one is to say that it is possible to have empathy with someone with respect to a directed emotional state (and not simply with respect to his state plain and simple), then one has to claim that it is possible in some sense to merely feel an emotion directed towards an object.

I claim that it is possible. It seems to me that there is a difference between merely feeling an emotion and merely feeling an emotion in view of a certain object or state of affairs. If you are merely feeling an emotion while being aware of and attentive to a certain object, then you could be said to experience your emotion in view of this object, and, in this sense, you and your emotion could also be said to be directed towards this object. Consequently, if you are aware of and attentive to the object of another person's emotional state while having

empathy with him, then you could also be said to have empathy with him with respect to his state as being directed towards this object. If he is, for example, afraid of a particular dog, then it is possible for you to merely feel fear in view of this particular dog, and if he is sad that something is the case, then it is possible for you to merely feel sadness in view of the thought of this something being the case. In this sense, I believe that it is possible to have empathy with someone with respect to his fear of a certain thing or his sadness that a certain state of affairs obtains, rather than just simply with respect to his fear or sadness.

These are the similarities that I believe must obtain between an emotion felt as part of having empathy with someone, and the emotional state with respect to which one has this empathy. However, to recall to mind what I said in Chapter 6, the difference between merely feeling an emotion and being in an emotional state is that whereas the latter involves having a tendency or disposition to act or behave in certain ways, merely feeling an emotion does not involve any such tendency or disposition. Consequently, to say that emotions felt as part of having empathy are merely felt is to say that having these emotions does not involve a tendency or disposition to act or behave as if you are in the corresponding emotional states. If you feel, e.g., sadness as part of having empathy with someone who is sad, then this sadness is not associated with a tendency or disposition to act as if you are sad; and if you feel fear as part of having empathy with someone who is afraid, then this feeling of fear is not associated with a tendency or disposition to act as if you are afraid.

7.3 On the Causes of Empathetic Emotions

I turn now to condition (3) in my definition, namely, that if S has empathy with O with respect to an emotional state, *e*, of the type, *E*, then S merely feels an emotion of the same type *E* because (a) S has been directly exposed to an expression of *e*, or (b) S has entertained an idea of the situation of O, or (c) S has entertained an idea of *e*.

Condition (3) specifies the idea that if you feel an emotion as part of having empathy with someone else, then this emotion is, in some way, dependent on the state or situation of this other person. Earlier we saw Nancy Snow express this idea by saying that the emotion must be felt because the other person is feeling a similar emotion. However, as I then pointed out, this formulation is in some respects too wide, and in some too narrow. It is too wide because it allows for your emotion to be caused through deviant and unacceptable causal chains, and it is too narrow because it excludes the possibility that you feel your emotion

because and only because you have entertained an idea of the situation in which this other person finds himself.

In order to avoid these problems I have formulated this condition in terms of the three subclauses (a), (b), and (c). Taken together, I believe that these subclauses are wide enough to include all the examples that we want to include, and, taken individually, I think that they are narrow enough to exclude most of the unwanted examples. It is of course possible that my formulation of the condition is not immune to all counterexamples, but I do believe that it steers clear of at least those examples I raised against Snow's definition.

(a) Being exposed to an expression of e

According to subclause (a), if a person, S, merely feels an emotion, e^* , as part of having empathy with another person, O, then it may be the case that S feels e^* because S has been directly exposed to an expression of an emotional state of the same type in O. The point of adding this clause is to allow for the possibility that S's feeling of e^* is dependent upon the presence of a similar emotion in O without having to presuppose that S knows or believes anything about O's state or situation. In the contemporary literature on empathy there are primarily two theories about how this might happen, both of which take their starting-point in the circumstance that a person has been directly exposed to an expression of an emotion in someone else.

According to the first theory, the theory of imitation or mimicry, a person can acquire an empathetic emotion through imitating or synchronizing her behavior with the behavior of someone else. This theory can be found in the writings of Adam Smith, and it was clearly expressed by Theodor Lipps. Today, many philosophers and psychologists writing about empathy as emotional sharing adhere to the idea, and there are now also a number of empirical studies that support it. These studies have been presented and discussed elsewhere, and I will not discuss them further here. Suffice to say that it has been shown both that people have a tendency to imitate or synchronize their facial expressions, postures, movements, and speech patterns with those of other persons, and that by adopting the facial expressions, postures, etc., characteristic of certain emotions, people can in fact evoke these emotions in themselves (see Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, 1994; Davis 1996; Hoffman 2000).

According to the second theory, a person can acquire an empathetic emotion by being exposed to an expression that has, in some way, become conditioned in her to give rise to a certain emotion. This theory differs from the theory of imitation in that it does not assume that you must imitate the expression in order

to acquire the emotion. On this theory, the emotion is assumed to be conditioned to occur directly upon the empathizer's being exposed to, and, on some level, apprehending the expression (Davis 1996; Hoffman 2000).

In the contemporary literature on empathy these are the two main explanations of how a person can acquire an empathetic emotion, that do not presuppose that this person has a belief or conscious idea of the state or situation of the person who is the object of her empathy. Both theories entail that the empathizer feels her empathetic emotion as a result of having been exposed to an expression of a similar emotion in the other person, and this is one reason for formulating (a) in this particular way.

A second reason is that this particular formulation steers clear of some unwanted cases where the presence of an emotion in one person gives rise to a similar emotion in someone else. As we saw earlier, Snow has claimed that, as long as a person, S, experiences an emotion because another person, O, experiences a similar emotion, it is possible for S to feel this emotion as part of having empathy with O. However, as is shown with the example of the doctor who, because he was upset, gave his patient a drug which made her upset, this makes the condition too wide. In order to sift out this and many other unwanted cases, I have made the condition more specific by saying that S has to feel her emotion because she has been exposed to an expression of a similar emotion in O. Admittedly, the notion of an expression of an emotional state is vague, but I take it that giving someone a drug cannot count as an expression of being upset.

(b) Entertaining an idea of O's situation

According to subclause (b) if a person, S, feels an emotion, e^* , as part of having empathy with another person, O, then it can be the case that S feels e^* because she has entertained an idea of O's situation. This subclause is intended to cover those cases where S feels an empathetic emotion as a result of having learned about another person's situation; cases where she feels her emotion because she has pictured someone else's situation or because she has imagined herself in it.

There are four remarks I want to make concerning the formulation of (b) and the idea that it is intended to express. The first is that the term 'situation' is here not only used in the objective sense distinguished in Chapter 3, but also in the subjective sense. Thus, a person may come to experience an empathetic emotion either by imagining being in the objective situation that another person actually is in, or by imagining being in a situation that another person takes himself to be in. The latter allows for the possibility of evoking an empathetic emotion

through imagining being in a situation that another person mistakenly believes he is in.

The second remark is that although there certainly are some ways of picturing another person's situation that are better than others at calling forth an emotion, one does not always have to go to the length of actively imagining oneself being in this situation in order to respond emotionally. Deliberately simulating the beliefs and desires of another person is certainly a good way of bringing about an emotional response, but it is not necessary for empathy.² It is also possible to experience an emotion immediately upon learning about another person's situation, responding immediately with an emotion as if one were in this situation oneself.

The next thing I want to point out is that even though subclause (b) says that S feels e^* as a result of having entertained an idea of the situation of O, when S first acquires e^* , it is not necessary that she is aware of the situation as being O's; that is, she does not have to know or believe anything about whose situation it is. All that is needed is that she is aware of the situation, and that she feels her emotion in response to it. Consequently, although empathy with respect to, say, O's sadness that his father has passed away does require that S knows that O is sad that his father has passed away (according to condition (5)), and that S feels sadness in view of the fact that O's father has passed away (according to condition (2)), it does not require that S acquires her feeling of sadness as a result of entertaining the idea that O's father has died. She can also get the feeling simply through entertaining the idea that the father of *someone*, who in this case happens to be O, has died.

The fourth and final point is a direct consequence of the previous ones: Contrary to what Susan L. Feagin (1996, 95) has claimed, having empathy with another person does not require that one has chosen this person as the intended object of one's empathy prior to picturing his situation. On the contrary, just as S may come to believe that O is in a certain emotional state through noticing that S tends to feel a certain way when she is in O's presence, so she can also come to believe this through noticing that she reacts with a certain emotion immediately upon learning about O's present situation. As both Neill (1999) and Harold (2000) have pointed out, in some cases we simply find ourselves sharing other people's emotions, and, as they also noted, it does not seem unreasonable to allow for the possibility that a state of empathy might arise out of such a

² The same goes for what Richard Wollheim calls "centrally imagining an event" (Wollheim 1984, III). Put very crudely, centrally imagining an event involves picturing an event from inside, or from the perspective of, one of the participants in this event.

discovery. Thus, even though the present definition says that you cannot have *empathy* with respect to another person's emotional state unless you know that this person is in this state, it does not say that *the emotion that you feel* as part of having empathy with this person must depend upon a belief or knowledge about his situation or his emotional state.

(c) *Entertaining an idea of e*

Subclause (c), finally, is added to allow for cases in which S feels an emotion because she has entertained an idea of the emotional state of O, but in which she has reached this idea neither through being exposed to an expression of O nor through an awareness of O's situation. This could, for instance, happen when S reads about someone else's emotional state. By reading about it, S would acquire an idea of this state, and this idea could, in turn, give rise to a similar emotion in S. The latter could perhaps happen through S's coming to imagine what it would be like for her to be in that state, or it could happen as a result of the idea being conditioned in her to give rise to a similar emotion. Whatever the exact explanation, it does seem possible for an idea of an emotional state to give rise to the affective experiences characteristic of that state, and since a person may come to acquire such an idea in ways that are not covered by subclauses (a) and (b), we need to add (c).

7.4 *How Empathetic Emotions are not Caused*

While condition (3) indicates the ways in which an emotion felt as part of empathy must be caused, condition (4) states how it cannot be caused. This condition says that if S merely feels an emotion, e^* , as part of having empathy with respect to an emotional state of O, then it is not the case that S merely feels e^* because of an actual or anticipated satisfaction or frustration of any of S's wishes.

Condition (4) is a specification of the idea that empathetic emotions are not caused in the same way as ordinary emotions and emotional states are. As I have said previously, this idea seems to be shared by most contemporary philosophers writing about empathy, and, as we saw in Part 1, it has also played a prominent role in the theories that preceded the current notion of empathy. This particular way of specifying the idea is implied in Robert M. Gordon's account of empathy in *The Structure of Emotions* (1987, 151f.), and it has also been hinted at by Ian Ravenscroft (1998, 175). As far as I know, however, no one has spelled it out in exactly the way I do here.

In most cases, emotions and emotional states are caused by actual or anticipated wish-satisfactions and wish-frustrations. Generally, when we feel an emotion, we feel it as part of being in an emotional state. When we feel sadness, we usually feel it as part of being sad, and when we feel anger we usually feel it as part of being angry. In most of these cases our emotional states are also directed towards different states of affairs; we are angry or sad that something has happened or that a certain state of affairs obtains. In these cases, our emotions are in fact caused by an actual or anticipated satisfaction or frustration of our wishes.

This, then, is how the causal history of empathetic emotions differs from that of ordinary emotions. Even if empathetic emotions are sometimes caused by a belief concerning someone's emotional state, and even if they are sometimes caused by a belief concerning the situation in which another person finds himself, on this particular conception of empathy, it is assumed that these emotions are not caused by any actual or anticipated wish-satisfaction or wish-frustration which these beliefs might give rise to. If you feel empathetic sadness because you believe that someone is sad, then it is not the case that you feel this sadness because the belief has frustrated a wish to the contrary. Similarly, if you feel empathetic joy because you believe that someone has won the lottery, then it is not the case that you feel this joy because the belief has satisfied a wish that he won the lottery.

This characterization of how empathetic emotions emerge not only captures the idea behind most contemporary descriptions of how these emotions are and are not caused, it can also explain one further feature of these emotions. As Gordon has pointed out, empathetic emotions are sometimes described as "vicarious affective responses". They are said to be experienced in the place of someone else, or as if from the perspective of another person. Usually, this is taken to mean that empathetic emotions are *not* experienced from one's own perspective; i.e., that they are not experienced in response to one's own situation or what one takes to be one's situation (Gordon 1987, 152). As Martin L. Hoffman puts it, empathetic emotions are "more appropriate to another's situation than one's own" (Hoffman 2000, 4).

In *The Structure of Emotions*, Gordon explained this feature of the empathetic emotions by saying that when S shares, e.g., O's joy in empathy, then S feels joy as a result of having simulated O's beliefs and desires, and the joy S feels "is not one of actual gladness or joy but one of disengaged or 'as if' gladness or joy" (Gordon 1987, 152). I would, of course, say that the joy S feels in this example is merely felt joy. More importantly, however, and as I think Gordon implies,

when S feels this joy, then she does not feel it as a result of any of her wishes being satisfied. If O is glad that he has won the lottery, then although S may feel empathetic joy because she believes that O has won the lottery or because she has imagined being in O's situation, S does not feel this joy because of any wish-satisfaction on her part. This explains why S can be said to feel the emotion from O's perspective rather than from her own, and also why an empathetic emotion is more appropriate to the empathizee's situation than to the empathizer's.

7.5 Knowing that O is in the Emotional State e

According to the fifth and final condition, having empathy with respect to the emotional state, *e*, of another person, O, requires knowing that O is in *e*. This means that in order for S to be able to have empathy with respect to O's sadness, S has to know that O is sad, and in order for S to be able to have it with respect to O's sadness that his father has passed away, S has to know that O is sad that his father has passed away.

I have added this knowledge condition for the same reason as Snow: Having empathy with respect to O's emotional state requires at least that S believes that O is in this state. However, since S's belief cannot consist simply in a lucky guess, we need to put some sort of restriction on it. One way of doing this is by saying that the belief must be justified, but just as Gettier (1963) showed that justified true belief is not sufficient for knowledge, so one can also show that a justified true belief (coupled with an emotion that is caused and felt in the right way) is not sufficient for empathy either.

Consider the following example: Smith's friend Jones is upset because he has been fired from his job. Smith, unaware of this, dials the number to Jones's office and reaches a receptionist who tells her that Jones has been fired. Smith is now justified in believing that her friend has lost his job, and, knowing him, she is also justified in believing that he is upset about it. The problem, however, is that Smith never reached her friend's office. Due to some problems with the phone lines, she reached a different company, where it so happened that a different Jones had been fired. However, since Smith is unaware of this, and since she can hardly be blamed for not suspecting anything, one must nevertheless conclude that she is justified in believing that her friend is upset. If she now also merely feels upset as a result of imagining herself in her friend's position, then one would also have to conclude that she has empathy with Jones.

I think most people would find it odd to say that Smith has empathy with Jones in this case. And the reason for this is that, even though Smith's belief that

Jones is upset is both justified and true, it is nevertheless a belief that she has reached simply by coincidence. She has not arrived at this belief in the right way.

Now, rather than attempting to specify in which way(s) Smith must have arrived at this belief, I prefer to follow Snow's example and simply say that empathy with respect to the emotional state of another person requires knowing that this person is in this state. Given that empathy already presupposes that O is in this state, and given that knowledge that p requires that one has arrived at the belief that p in the right way, saying that S must know that O is in this state is in effect saying that S has reached this belief in the right way.

One may wonder, however, whether demanding that S knows that O is in e is not demanding too much. Are there not ways of acquiring the belief that O is in e that are good enough for empathy but not good enough for knowledge? And does S really have to take herself to know that O is in e in order to be able to have empathy with him? Giving a definitive answer to the first question is beyond the scope of this work. In relation to the problem posed by the second question, however, I would like to point out that this is a problem only if one assumes that knowing that O is in e implies believing that one knows this. If one does not accept this assumption – and I cannot see any obvious reasons why one should – then it is possible to claim that S knows that O is in e without taking herself to know this.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

By way of conclusion, I will briefly indicate how empathy differs from the related phenomena of compassion, and emotional contagion or infection. This will show the usefulness of the definition, and, hopefully, it will also help bring out more clearly some of the points of the definition.

Suppose that O is in a state of sadness. If you then feel compassion for O, or if you become infected with his sadness, or if you have empathy with him, then there will in each case be some sense in which you share his sadness. However, each case will in some respects also be significantly different from the others. Most notably, there will be differences with respect to how you experience your feelings of sadness, and with respect to how these feelings are caused. Thanks to the above analysis, we can now bring out these differences clearly. If you feel compassion for O, then you are in a state of sadness for his sake, because of an actual wish-frustration on your part. If you have been infected by his sadness, then you are in a state of sadness, but not because of a wish-frustration on your part. And if you have empathy with him with respect to his sadness, then you

merely feel sadness, and you feel this sadness not because of an actual wish-frustration. Thus, on the proposed definition, empathy is sharply distinguished from compassion and emotional contagion, and with the help of the analysis, it also becomes clear how these phenomena differ from and resemble each other.

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