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The Archeology of Empathy

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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There has been renewed interest in the concept of empathy for two main reasons. First, the discovery of mirror neurons has provided a possible neurological basis for empathy. Second, empathy has been recently advanced as a possible basis for an ethics that is neither grounded on abstract moral law, nor deontological in nature, nor one requiring an essentialist interpretation of what it means to be human. Rather, empathy could be the structure underlying a non self-centered approach to caring and ethical action that takes into account the specificity of human embodiment in concrete historical and culturally determined situations. In order to give a rigorous analysis of empathy so that the concept may be used to provide the philosophical foundation of how we are ethical, based on the primordial

empathetic structure of thought itself, this dissertation interrogates the diverse historical roots of empathy and brings together various assessments of the structure of the phenomenon. The dissertation begins with Vico and progresses through the 18th and 19th century German Aesthetics, Hermeneutics, and Psychology of Herder, Vischer, and Lipps to the 20th Century phenomenological approach of Stein. It demonstrates that the process of empathy enables our access to others because it underlies the most basic structures of language and language acquisition, as well as object, subject, and intersubjective constitution, and the methodology appropriate to the human sciences.

> It is difficult to conceptualize something that is predicated at once as a form of knowledge, a form of communication, a capacity, a process, an ego expression, a mode of data gathering, an ability, an experience, a means of understanding and a mode of perceiving.[1]

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[1] Joseph D. Lichtenberg, Melvin Bornstein, and Donald Silver, *Empathy*, 2 vols., *Psychoanalytic Inquiry Book Series* (Hillsdale: Analytic Press : Distributed by L. Erlbaum Associates, 1984), 1:13.

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Introduction

"Empathy is a rich, puzzling and intriguing phenomenon."[2]

Recently there has been a renewed interest in the concept of empathy. In the last four years alone, recent publications have addressed the possible import of the concept in areas as varied as psychoanalysis,[3] ethics[4], feminist ethics,[5] in the debate between theory theory and simulation theory, [6] in political theory,[7] in the social neurosciences,[8] and in phenomenology.[9]

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[2] Robert L. Katz, *Empathy, Its Nature and Uses* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p.vii.

[3] E.g., Françoise Coblence and Jean-Michel Porte, *L'empathie*, 1re éd. ed., vol. 3, *Monographies De Psychanalyse De La Revue Française De Psychanalyse. Section Concept* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2004).

[4] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Stein : A Philosophical Prologue, 1913-1922*, *Sheed & Ward Book* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

[5] E.g., Michael A. Slote, *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007).

[6] E.g., Karsten R. Stueber, *Rediscovering Empathy: Agency, Folk Psychology, and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

[7] E.g., Beate Beckmann-Zöller and Hanna Gerl-Falkovitz, *Die Unbekannte Stein: Phänomenologie Und Sozialphilosophie*, *Wissenschaft Und Religion Bd. 14* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2006).

[8] Jean Decety and C. Daniel Batson, "Editorial: Social Neurosciences Approaches to Interpersonal Sensitivity," in *Interpersonal Sensitivity: Entering Others' Worlds*, ed. Jean Decety and C. Daniel Batson (New York: Psychology Press, 2007).

At its inception, the concept of empathy was largely understood as a process of feeling oneself into. It was developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a concept central to German aesthetics and from there it became an active component of psychology and psychoanalysis. Unfortunately, as it moved from one field to another, and was translated into one language and then another, the concept of empathy was transformed and never clarified, leaving us with an imprecise concept that lent itself to misunderstanding, if not sometime misuse. For instance, Victor Basch translated it into French as *Sympathie,* and unwittingly changed the connotations of the term.[10] Ricoeur's translation of it as *intropathie* is far superior, but by then the philosophy of empathy had already become the philosophy of sympathy.[11]

Despite the centrality of the concept of empathy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it subsequently fell into disrepute. The lack of consensus between the various definitions of empathy brought about different

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[9] E.g., Dieter Lohmar, Dirk Fonfara, and Universität zu Köln. Husserl-Archiv., *Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven Der Phänomenologie: Neue Felder Der Kooperation: Cognitive Science, Neurowissenschaften, Psychologie, Soziologie, Politikwissenschaft Und Religionswissenschaft*, *Phaenomenologica,* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006).

[10] Victor Basch, *Essai Critique Sur L'esthétique De Kant*, 2. ed., *Bibliothèque D'histoire De La Philosophie* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1927).

[11] Edmund Husserl, *Idées Directrices Pour Une Phénoménologie*, trans. Paul Ricoeur, 3. ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1950).

and often negative connotations associated with the concept. The most formidable blow endured by the concept of empathy was probably due to the publication of Wilhelm Worriger's *Abstraction and Empathy*. In it Worringer one-sidedly misinterpreted Lipps in particular and empathy in general. He interprets it as being understood by others as a feeling of oneness that allows for no critical distance. He emphasizes its component of emotional sharing and contrasts it with the ability to abstract, as such opposing empathy to rationality.[12] This mistaken association of empathy with sentimentality polemically marginalized the concept empathy for most of the twentieth century. This association, I suggest, is at the core of the reluctance of feminists to use the concept. Now, it is time to rehabilitate it.

I was originally attracted to empathy as a working concept for a possible basis for a new approach to ethics and a new understanding of the intersubjective element to what it means to be human. Increasingly, there have been many calls from many quarters that are unsatisfied with modern approaches to ethics that either rely on abstract moral law or some essentialist interpretation of what it means to be human. Both approaches seem to negate our individualized, embodied, culturally specific situation that

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[12] Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 1st Elephant pbk. ed. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997 [1908]).

should surely be the practical and actual foundation for how we should act. On the other hand, the opposed approaches that concentrate on our differences often end up positing a transcendent otherness that is both incredible and difficult to develop into the basis for a commonality that would render ethical action possible. In some regards, a care based ethics seems to present a possible alternative to these two approaches. However, as I investigated the concept of care, I began to ask not only why we should care, not only whether there is an imperative to care, but ultimately what the phenomenon of care might be. What is care? The concept of care is ultimately, I believe, linked back into the possibility of empathy—but it should be noted that one can empathize without caring. This led me to pose the question, "What is empathy?" Empathy is not something we can simply point to. It is a concept and as such is determined by the history of its use. In order to understand what we mean by empathy, in order to appreciate its meaning in full, we need to know the history of the concept. The concept of empathy has a long and illustrious history often far removed from how it is today confused with what I would call sympathy. To rehabilitate the concept of empathy as a rigorous philosophical concept that perhaps one day could form the basis for a new approach to ethics, I propose this archeology of the concept.

For my archeological study, I have selected some of the major proponents of empathy: Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744) for the role empathy plays in his new science, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) for the role empathy

plays in the hermeneutic method, Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807-1887) and son Robert Vischer (1847-1933) for the role of empathy in German Aesthetics, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) as an anti-empathy proponent of a knowledge of other minds by analogy, Theodor Lipps (1851-1914) for his analysis of empathy as identification, and Edith Stein (1891-1942) for her phenomenological analysis of the concept.

"Empathy" is itself a translation of the German concept of *Einfühlung* or in-feeling, which finds an earlier manifestation in the Italian concept of the process of *entrare*, or entering. In all the authors I examine, these concepts avoid some of the excessive reductionism of the Enlightenment that hoped that reason would be self-grounding, self-explicatory, and universal.

Vico, Herder, and Stein all hoped to find in *entrare,* in the former case, and *Einfühlung,* in the latter cases, a methodology appropriate to what we today might call the social or human sciences. All believed that we cannot just appropriate the methodology of the natural sciences and apply it to the human sciences. The human sciences need their own method, underpinned by a philosophic methodology.

Empathy is central to Vico's new science. Empathy subtends metaphor, which underlies both language acquisition as well as language extension. To understand the way we inhabit a meaningful world, we must re-empathize back into these most basic elements of language and culture.

Herder's problematic is the difficulty of understanding other cultures as well as our past. On the one hand, if we assume that we can judge others by our own standards we assume similarity and do not understand their specificity. On the other, if we assume that they are utterly foreign to us we consign ourselves to relativism and incomprehension. For him, empathy along with a hermeneutical approach are supposed to navigate between both of these objectionable extremes. Herder is the first to use the term as a technical philosophical one, although it appears in the writings of his teacher, Hamann.[13]

For Stein, there is more than one type of causality. There is the causality appropriate to the natural sciences. When effects lead us back to causes, they do so by indication. Smoke indicates fire because fire is putatively causing

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[13] Hamann uses the notion in his so-called "love letters" to Kant. In December 1759, Kant asked him to contribute to an educational book on physics—hoping to philosophically rehabilitate Hamann into the Enlightenment fold, as well as to bring the principles of the Enlightenment to children. Hamann immediately tried to undermine the project in the letters. In harmony with Rousseau's program as espoused in *Emile*, Hamann argued that we should not preach to children, not corrupt them, but rather *"feel ourselves into"* their world. The three letters are included in Johann Georg Hamann, *Fünf Hirtenbriefe Das Schuldrama Betreffend. Einführung Und Kommentar Von Sven-Aage Jørgensen*, ed. Sven Aage Jørgensen, *Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab. Historisk-Filosofiske Meddeleser* (København: I kommission hos Munksgaard, 1962). Also see Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp.32-3.

the smoke. Sentient causality is another type of causality, whereby a bodily expression expresses meaning. Your scowl does not indicate your disapproval; it is disapproving. If we are to understand what it means to be human and how we live in a realm of reasons and values we need to understand sentient causality. Sentient causality is in turn underpinned by our ability to empathize. Stein's breakthrough is to apply the phenomenological method to empathy. She is not interested in putative genetic or causal analyses of how we empathize. Nor does she think we need to have recourse to an inductive argument to gain a knowledge of other minds, as did Mill. Rather, she concentrates on giving an eidetic analysis of the experience of empathy that we do in fact have. Her analysis steers between two extremes that verge on solipsism, namely, Husserl's transcendentalism and Scheler's personalism. In Husserl's case, we can empathize with nothing that is particular to the individuality of the individual, and with Scheler we are all too individual to empathize with each other at all. With Stein, we see the beginning of a path to a new approach to ethics: one that neither treats us solely in terms of universal similarities nor treats us as irreducibly different individuals.

German aesthetics is another tributary to the concept of empathy and it is here that the distinction between empathy, or *Einfühlung* and sympathy is in clearest relief. Again, empathy avoids a kind of universalism or formalism that stretches from Kant to Hegel to Herbart. Against this formalism, Friedrich Theodor Vischer and his son Robert Vischer argue that the beauty

of a work of art depends on its symbolism. Its symbolism depends on the way in which our specific embodiment allows us to feel ourselves into the work of art. They contend that we feel ourselves into the work of art, the architectural space of a building, the weeping of a tree, and even the *face* of a cliff. They provide the foundations for an understanding of empathy much broader than sympathy. No one would suggest we can sympathize with a cliff. Robert Vischer, in particular, lays out how empathy plays a crucial role in the very constitution of our experience of the bodies of objects and as well as our experience of other living embodied subjects, which is more fully addressed by later thinkers such as Stein.

Empathy underlies language, underpins the methodology of the *Geistwissenschaften,* and not only enables the constitution of subjects, but also of objects.

Chapter 1

Vico and Herder

Empathy, Language, and History

Introduction

> Surely enough, there are variable expressions and there are variations in the precise configuration of stimuli that can induce an emotion across cultures and among individuals. But the thing to marvel at, as you fly high above the planet, is the similarity, not the difference. It is that similarity, incidentally, that makes cross-cultural relations possible and that allows for art and literature, music and film to cross frontiers.[14]

The question of how we come to understand others is a perennial one. Two possible methods have been advanced to answer this question. The first method is based upon "explanation" and, in accordance with naturalism, it argues that the method of the natural sciences can be applied to the human sciences. The crux of this method is scientific and it attempts, through the application of conceptual schemes, to understand the actions or motivations of others. Yet, as Kogler and Stueber object,

> To characterize a person from twelfth-century Europe in terms of the conceptual repertoire available to us today would be a pure anachronism.

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[14] Antonio R. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), p.53.

> Even if we could rationalize actions in such a way, such a rationalization could not provide the reasons that moved the agents, that is, it would be a purely external characterization of the agent's perspective.[15]

The second method is based upon "understanding." It argues that the human sciences necessitate a specific methodology in order to understand the motivations of human actions. This method should facilitate the understanding of radically different cultures with radically different ways of reasoning and conceptual schemes. It centers on an understanding of human actions as a result of inclinations and desires influenced by social, historical, and cultural embeddeness. The emphasis on an interpretation of context makes this method hermeneutic. In this dissertation, I analyze the role played by empathy in the development of the second method.

Empathic understanding, does not relinquish causality *per se*, but recognizes that there is a specific causality to occurrences in the realm of human affairs—what Stein terms "sentient causality" in her 1916 dissertation. An understanding based on empathy does not "explicate" human actions. It "follows" human motivations. The knowledge claims about the causes for a person's actions are derived from an "empathic" re-experiencing of the motivations and mental purposes of another.

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[15] Hans Herbert Kögler and Karsten R. Stueber, *Empathy and Agency: The Problem of Understanding in the Human Sciences* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p.17.

This simulated imaginative identification with the other needs two moments, if it is to yield understanding. It requires, first, an ability to share into another's emotional experience (the affective component, the empathetic experience) and, second, an interpretation of that person's experience, (the cognitive component).

The ability to share into, to feel oneself into—the empathetic experience *per se* is dependent upon the ability to immerse oneself into the world of experience of the other, which is dependent upon her condition of life and the climate surrounding her.

We can share into common forms of embodiment; common psychological organization and forms of rationality. What we share into can be based on common social, historical and linguistic practices. The common basis of sharing enables the transposition into the respective experiences of the other. Without some commonality to enable empathy one would be left with a relativism that would preclude any form of sharing and thus of understanding.

The conscious projection into the other's world through the hermeneutical analysis of the traditions, language etc. will enable the projective imaginative identification to take place. Of course, no complete identification takes place. Rather there is a moment in empathy where one is *at* the experience *with* the other. This "feeling oneself into" can lead to the re-experiencing of the

motivations of the other's actions and thus to interpretation and understanding.

My first chapter analyzes the process of "*entrare*" in Vico and "*sich einfühlen*" in Herder. Vico's New Science is one of the first sources for modernity's discourse on empathy. Rejecting the method of the natural sciences, Vico searches for a method appropriate to the study of man as historically determined. Vico designs his method to account for our social and cultural embeddedness, and as such is close to what we call today cultural anthropology. He needs a method that neither simply abstracts from our cultural conditions, nor universalizes our cultural specificity. "Empathy" is Vico's answer.

For Vico, empathetic imagination allows one to feel oneself into, "entrare," past or foreign civilizations. "Entrare" is the process underlying Vico's new science and the crux of his method for historical recollection. Empathy allows us to access what he calls a mental dictionary of primordial imaginative universals. Vico's example of perhaps the primordial imaginative universal is the experience of Jove expressing himself in thunder. Once a first imaginative universal occurs it gives rises to further imaginative universals through metaphor. Metaphor enables the expansion of bodily-related expressions into more abstract concepts. When the metaphorical structure underlying abstract concepts is forgotten over time they become "intelligible

universals," i.e., general terms with a supposed literal meaning.[16] For Vico, what enables us to enter into other cultures and to understand what underpins historical changes is the ability to feel ourselves back into these primordial metaphorical structures and to hence retrieve the primordial images and connections underlying the intelligible universals. We are able to feel ourselves into these primordial images because empathy subtends the metaphors in the first place. So empathy is both part of the methodology for his new science and a component of the origin of the cultural expressions he is investigating.

Herder is the first one to coin the verb "*sich einfühlen*." Herder, following unknowingly in the steps of Vico through Hamann's influence, analyzes language hermeneutically in terms of its history. Language for Herder should not be understood in terms of static structures, but rather, in terms of *Werdegang*, in terms of its development. This *Werdegang* of language usage is defined by Herder in terms of what he calls *Klima,* or climate. The climate of

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[16] As Nietzsche puts it: "What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and; anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions—they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins." Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Nietzsche Reader*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Duncan Large, *Blackwell Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006), p117.

a time is the background context and mores that informs our practices and gives them meaning. To understand a text, its time, and the motivations of the author on her own terms requires that we "feel ourselves into" the text and the language used. Herder's genetic method consists of three steps. First, a feeling oneself into the embeddedness of the author's corpus, second, a feeling oneself into in the author's perceptual and affective world—the *Klima* of her time, and third, a bracketing of one's own history. Empathy is crucial to all of these steps. Empathy is essential to how we use and understand language, and thus, in part, underpins our experience of intersubjectivity.

Giovanni Battista Vico 1668-1744

> It is phantasy that makes present to our eyes lands that are very far away, that unites those things that are separated, that overcomes the inaccessible, that discloses what is hidden and builds a road through trackless places.[17] (Vico, *Oration* I)

On route to my genealogical investigation of *Einfühlung*, I would like to consider Vico's theory of historical development. I will not attempt to provide a full critical assessment of Vico's philosophy of history. My aim in the present chapter is to consider the method of historical recollection propounded by Vico in his *New Science*. Vico, through his elaboration of what we would now term "cultural anthropology," can be seen as one of the founders of the modern discourse on empathy.[18]

The Problem

Vico's project is inherently connected to what we would today label the problem of the hermeneutical interpretation of history. Vico's problem in the *New Science* is twofold, namely the twin problems of anachronism and

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[17] Giambattista Vico and Gian Galeazzo Visconti, *On Humanistic Education: (Six Inaugural Orations, 1699-1707)*, trans. Giorgio A. Pinton and Arthur W. Shippee (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.43.

[18] And through his indirect influence on Herder via Hamann.

relativism. Historians investigating the past import to a considerable degree their own contemporary framework into their interpretation. Conversely, if there is no appropriate way to work our way back into a previous epoch we are doomed to historical relativism. For Vico, the historians of his time were conceited in their belief that they could reach the "truth" of a particular epoch. As he says:

> [W]henever men can form no ideas of distant and unknown things, they judge them by what is familiar and at hand. This axiom points to the inexhaustible source of all errors about the principles of humanity that have been adopted by entire nations and by all the scholars.[19]

Again, he writes:

> [W]e must guard against scribal garblings, plagiarisms, forgeries, interpolations of alien hands through which it is difficult for us to recognize the originals […] These books contain allusions to custom often unknown, in corrupted codice; therefore the attainment of any science or art has become so difficult for us.

Vico argues not only that historians often import anachronisms, but also that historians import the detached methods of the natural sciences into the domain of history where it is inappropriate.

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[19] Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch, Rev. translation of the 3d ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), §122-3. Hereafter NS followed by paragraph number. Note there are three editions; the first edition will be referred to as FNS.

Vico's ambition with his New Science was, therefore, to introduce a new scientific method in order for the historian to be able to "feel himself into" these past remote cultures while avoiding 1) the tendency to import his own cultural and historical conditioning and 2) the tendency to analyze foreign cultures and behaviors along abstract universal lines, i.e. uninfluenced by the geographical or cultural contexts in which they lived.

La Scienza Nuova was written in 1725, revised in 1730, and again in 1744, the year of Vico's death.[20] Vico was dissatisfied with the way that the presuppositions of the physical sciences were applied to the human sciences. The originality of Vico's position was that unlike the philosophy of the modern period, which, for him, overemphasized the clarity and distinctness of conceptual or rational categories, Vico propounded retrieving a wide variety of ancient texts, fables, allegories, myths, and poetry. Vico's objective was to reconcile philosophy and philology.[21]

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[20] There is some speculation related to the last version of the *New Science* because of the possible onset of senility one year before his death and the eager influence of Vico's son. This notwithstanding, the last version of the *New Science* remains the most cited version of the three. I will refer to the first edition, Giambattista Vico and Leon Pompa, *The First New Science*, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) with the abbreviation FNS followed by a paragraph number.

[21] In his essay entitled 'Dante…Bruno. Vico…Joyce, ' Samuel Beckett criticizes this desire for alliance. He writes, "The danger is in the neatness of identifications. The conception of philosophy and philology as a pair of nigger minstrels out of the Teatro dei Piccoli is soothing, like the contemplation of a

In his introduction to Isaiah Berlin's *Against the Current*, Roger Hausheer, underlines that

> [D]espite their many differences, the thinkers of the French Enlightenment held in common a stock of fundamental presuppositions which went almost unchallenged: that human nature is the same in all times and place; that universal human goals, true end and effective means, are at least in principle discoverable; that a method similar to those of Newtonian science…. should be discovered and applied in the field of moral, politics, economics, and in the sphere of human relationships in general…[22]

Such a method, however, was not what Vico was looking for. On the contrary, and flying in the face of his contemporaries,[23] Vico contended that such a

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carefully folded ham-sandwich. Giambattista Vico himself could not resist the attractiveness of such coincidence of gesture. He insisted on complete identification between the philosophical abstraction and the empirical illustration, thereby annulling the absolutism of each conception – hoisting the real unjustifiably clear of its dimensional limits, temporalizing that which is extra-temporal." In *Samuel Beckett, Our Examination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1972).*

[22] Isaiah Berlin and Henry Hardy, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York: Viking Press, 1980).

[23] Charles de Montesquieu being the sole other exception, especially in *The Persian Letters* 1721, but there is no evidence that he read Vico, even at the recommendation of the abbey of Conty. In fact, Gagliani trying to pay Vico a posthumous compliment wrote, "[He] tried to ford the marsh of metaphysics, and although he sank in the morass, he gave footing to a more fortunate thinker about the spirits of the laws of the nations." Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth, 1976), p.90. Hereafter VH. Be that as it may, there were some parallels to be found between the two writers, indeed, as Isaiah Berlin writes, "There is a kind of continuous dialectic in all Montesquieu's writings between absolute values

scientific method was in fact "the unfortunate reason for all these problems" because "we have hitherto lacked a science that is both a history and philosophy *of humanity*." Vico's position prefigures the epistemological crisis of the scientific revolution, which produced the neo-humanistic turn of the 18th century. In Tagliacozzo's words:

> Vico returned to the humanists' discussions of letters and sciences and of poetry. Such a discussion and comparison brought about a reduction of the supremacy of the sciences […] This did not imply a dogmatic rejection of the sciences of nature; it was, rather, a new grounding of them, not conceiving them any longer as a structure existing in reality, but rather a construction made by man.[24]

The Solution

Vico's resounding rejection of ahistorical abstract theories that discount the concrete lived reality of social and political life is significant. For Vico,

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which seems to correspond to the permanent interests of men as such and those which depends upon time and place in a concrete situation." Berlin and Hardy, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, p.157. It should be added here that Montesquieu's writings were not so warmly received in France—*l'esprit,* among many other works, was banned by the Roman Catholic Church. Such a state of affairs would not have been very inspiring to Vico, who, while a "professed" catholic, was often read as a heretic and thus worried about the inquisition—which was very influential in Naples at the time.

[24] Giorgio Tagliacozzo et al., *Vico and Contemporary Thought: And for the First Time in English Translation Vico's Essay on the Heroic Mind* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1979), pp.95-96.

man can only be studied in his concrete historical situation.[25] Vico claims that men can come to know past civil societies because men make their own history.[26] He writes:

> But in the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never failing light of a truth beyond all question: that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the *modifications of our own human mind*. Whoever

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[25] The paramount importance of the concrete historical situation of man, and the thesis that the "*verum"* is identical to the *factum* helps explain the references to Vico in the Marxist traditions, a point obscured by the English translation of "verum" as the true. Marx mentions Vico by name in a letter to Ferdinand Lasalle, and in a letter to Engels, as well as in a footnote in *Capital*, respectively in Ferdinand Lassalle, *Nachgelassene Briefe Und Schriften*, ed. Gustav Mayer (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1922), III: 387f. in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels Gesamtausgabe (Mega)*, [1. Aufl.] ed. (Berlin: Dietz, 1972), 3abt.III, 63 and finally Karl Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik Der Politischen Oekonomie* (Hamburg: O. Meissner; L. W. Schmidt, 1867), Vol. I, 372 n.3. The true, *certum*, is what Descartes was striving to achieve, a truth such as a mathematical truth, which is reached, in Berlin's words, "by reasoning, where starting from axioms, every step is demonstrably and irrefutably proved" VH 100. Vico, on the other hand, remains on the side of *verum*—the simple recognition of intelligible purposive patterns in human activities. If mathematical reasoning were to be applied to human thought it would only leave us "with artificial constructions, logical figments with no necessary relation to the outside world." This is the *verum ipsum factum* of 1710. For a detailed analysis of the certum/verum see VH especially pp.96-113.

[26] Rather ironically, Marx, answers: "Men makes their own history but they do not choose the script." Karl Marx, "The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, " Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, trans. Richard Dixon, Robert Browning, and Jack Cohen (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), 2: 103. For the otherwise general influence of Vico's thought on Marx and Marxist philosophy see n.36 below.

> *reflects* on this cannot but marvel that the philosophers should have bent all their energies to the study of the word of nature, which, since God made it, He alone knows; and that they should have neglected the study of the world of nations, or civil world, which, since men had made it, men could come to know.[27]

To some extent, Vico espouses something akin to what we would call today a value-centered historicism.[28] The specificity that concrete historical situations bring with themselves accounts for the distinctive nature of every age and culture, and that is what historians need to heed. Vico's was an audacious position at the time, since the fundamental rationale behind his method went against most of the tenets of the Enlightenment. His new method of investigation—his new science—was supposed to avoid the pitfalls of reason merely reflecting upon itself.[29]

The structure of this new science—a human science—should not be patterned after a system designed to obtain objective truth about the material universe. This quest for objective knowledge, typical of the "Age of Reason," and specifically developed into a method by Descartes is, at this

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[27] NS 331, emphasis added.

[28] Value centered historicism is a concrete approach to ethics that denies universal applicability of one set of moral norms, while affirming that there are still valid moral norms. For a fuller discussion of "Value centered historicism" see Claes G. Ryn, "Universality and History: The Concrete as Normative," *Humanitas* VI, no. 1 (Fall 1992/Winter 1993).

[29] A *sienza* which should have rather be termed a *cosienza*.

time, opposed vehemently by Vico.[30] In contradistinction to such a method, Vico argues that understanding should be favored over deductive procedures. Human affairs should not be reduced to a set of measurements exemplifying pre-established laws. Following Vico, a reconstruction of human affairs along those lines is worthless since it ignores the lived reality of social and cultural structure and discounts the roles they play.

The conditions of possibility for historical reconstruction are dependent upon one's ability to "enter into" [*entrare*] a specific age or culture while simultaneously extracting oneself from one's own. Isaiah Berlin contends that Vico was perhaps influenced by the theories of "becoming one" with the object that were widespread in magical theories in the Renaissance. He writes:

> [Vico] is one of the true fathers of the doctrine of the unity of theory and practice, which was afterwards developed so richly in various directions by Hegel and his disciples and, in new directions, by Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. He believed that in principle we could re-enact in our minds–'enter' by sympathetic imagination–into what a class, a society […] individuals were at; what frustrated them in their search to satisfy their needs–the demands of social necessities and utilities in this or that situation; how they were affected by their own creation–cultural and historical. He supposes that

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[30] This was a method, however, that was espoused by Vico in his early writings. For an extensive discussion of the Vico/Descartes issue, see Leon Pompa, *Human Nature and Historical Knowledge: Hume, Hegel, and Vico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and for a more specific treatment of Vico and the Cogito see Robert Crease, *Vico and the Cogito*, ed. G. Tagliacozzo (New Jersey: Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1981).

> we can, by a species of imaginative insight, turn every *an sich* (to use Hegelian language)–an entity observed from outside by the agent (even if it is his own state of mind or body) into a *für sich,* an element in, assimilated to, his purposive, 'spiritual' activity.[31]

Yet, while the agent of this historical reconstruction is "asked" to perform a kind of emptying of the self[32] in order to suspend her beliefs and, so to speak, extracts herself out of herself, out of her culture, out of her tradition,[33] out of her community, this act of distancing is not proposed as a way to achieve the kind of dry aridness that natural science applies to its object. Vico in fact

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[31] VH 111

[32] Albeit very different than the emptying of the self, which Descartes had in mind when he sought to "raze everything to the ground and begin again from the original foundations." In a way, one could say that Descartes' subject was trying to become the foundation of knowledge. Vico propounds a rather different emptying of the self—one that necessitates a suspension of beliefs in order to get at the foundations of language (and the foundations of the subject), through etymology. See AT VII 17, René Descartes, Ch Adam, and Paul Tannery, *Œuvres De Descartes* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1964); Translated, René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. John Williams Cottingham, Bernard Arthur Owen, Rev. ed., *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Herder also calls for such an emptying or bracketing. See p.59, below.

[33] Of course after Lacan, one would rightly argue that the subject is always a linguistic subject and as such unable to escape the symbolic order. The self is always already a linguistic self shaped by culture. For fear of being accused of anachronism, one could say that Vico's intent is akin to the critical inquiry performed today by deconstruction. His analysis of concept formation is indeed supposed to bring to light the "ideology"(one might say), hidden but lingering in our everyday uses of words. See my analysis of his emphasis on metaphor in the section thereon below.

contrasted the scientific knowledge of objects to the possibility and specificity of knowledge of man. Vico reasons that since we can understand ourselves, therefore we can understand others, their predicaments and how they saw themselves.

Vico thus proposed a non-detached detachment,[34] a new type of critical involvement, an involvement that centers on a quasi-aesthetic[35] capacity for discrimination and integration; a capacity that alternates between projection and identification.

Even if the principles of civil society are "to be found within the modifications of our own human mind," the knowledge afforded will need to be on a different footing than the usual Cartesian one.[36] If by "knowing" Vico

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[34] An involved detachment not completely unlike the "evenly poised attention" laid down by Freud as a recommendation for the purpose of interpretation in the analytic situation in his "Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psychoanalysis" (1912e), Sigmund Freud et al., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953).

[35] This aesthetic capacity is elaborated in the chapter on Vischer.

[36] NS 331. There have been some discussions as to whether the "modifications" refer to changes in social rather than individual ones. Leon Pompa, "Vico's Science," *History and Theory* X, no. 1 (1971), argues that by modifications, Vico meant "purposes, necessities or utilities of the social world." Isaiah Berlin, on the other hand, argues that the modifications in question do not refer to the social world because "The laws that determine the successive stages of the *corsi e ricorsi* are too few and too general to make it possible to reconstruct specific social or cultural phenomena. The scientific method employed in the natural sciences is excluded inasmuch as it yields only 'external' knowledge, whereas we have an inside view of the acts and

understands only a rational reflection upon the "modifications of our minds," then his recurrent attacks on the enlightenment's systematicity in general, and on Cartesian method, in particular, seems at best self-defeating. And if, as Vico asserts, a knowledge can still be gained that does not include presuppositions and misconceptions imported by the historian, then Vico must supplement his definition of knowledge with another faculty—a faculty that enhances knowledge.[37] As we will see this faculty is the imagination. Vico's use of the faculty of imagination not only offers an alternative methodology to the Cartesian analysis, but also, an alternative to the later Romantic approach to life. In contradistinction to the philosophy of the modern period which presents us with a disjunct because

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works of man. If the method is not connected to the capacity for intercommunication whereby men are enabled to understand and misunderstand one another, both within the same culture, and historically, across stretches of times and varieties of cultures—Dilthey's *Verstehen*—then what does Vico mean?" VH 32. I side here with Berlin.

[37] Although a thorough analysis of knowledge in Vico can neither do without an account of Common Sense, *Sensus Communis,* nor without an exposition on the working of "providence," it would take me too far afield for this specific project. I will elucidate how Vico's imaginative universals form the dictionary of mental words common to all men—the *Sensus Communis*—in the upcoming section on metaphor. For a detailed account of Common Sense, see Grassi's pieces entitled "The priority of Common Sense and Imagination: Vico's Philosophical Relevance Today," trans. Azizeh Azodi, in *Ernesto Grassi, Vico and Humanism: Essays on Vico, Heidegger, and Rhetoric, Emory Vico Studies (New York: P. Lang, 1990)*, pp.19-40, 44-46. For an analysis on the role played by providence see, Isaiah Berlin and Henry Hardy, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment : Vico, Hamann, Herder* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), especially p 55-57, 94-96.

> [w]e are asked to pursue philosophical understanding either in terms of the principles of evidence, the concept, and the argument, or to reject these and think directly from the situation of life, to 'transvaluate values,' introspect or await Being. Vico offers us another possibility. His thought begins outside of this disjunct. It begins neither with *Geist* nor with *Leben*. It begins instead with the imagination, with fantasia, as an original and independent power of mind.[38]

The faculty of imagination allows us to recollect and re-enter the world of civil society. This is possible insofar as it has been created by men, and because as humans we follow the patterns of the previous modifications of the mind that gave rise to these other "worlds." But for these possible worlds not to be simply imaginary, for them to be the portrait of a society or an age we need to work backwards from our present to that past, we need a sense of historical perspective. The central idea at the heart of Vico's thought as Berlin puts it,

> is that in the individual and society alike, phase follows phase not haphazardly (as the Epicureans thought), nor in a sequence of mechanical causes or effects (as the stoics taught), but as stages in the pursuit of an intelligent purpose—man's effort to understand himself and his world, and to realize his capacities in it. History for him is the orderly procession […] of ever deepening types of apprehension of the world, of ways of feeling, acting, expressing, each of which grows out, and supersedes, its predecessor. […] So begins the conception of the 'phenomenology' of human

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[38] Donald Phillip Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p.33.

> experience and activity, of men's history and life as determined by their own, at first unconscious, then progressively more conscious, creative molding.[39]

Vico maintains that we can think ourselves into cultures "diverse from one's own" through an investigation into the history of words, i.e., through the practice of etymology. Vico's primary concern was to develop what he calls: *una critica filosofica*—a critical philosophy based on a critical examination of the history of ideas. Vico's critical approach examines the history of words—a philological and etymological inquiry into concept formation—because it is not the mind that forms the words but rather the words are what form the mind. "Language creates minds,"[40] Vico explains. In the introduction to her *Imagination and Historical Knowledge,* Cecilia Miller states that Vico

> maintained [that] it was possible to enter by means of the imagination into ancient, even pre-literate societies, by means of a critical examination of social usage, thereby reconstructing certain forms of social behavior. His critical method was not all-forgiving; rather it offered a means to examine critically cultures quite diverse from one's own.[41]

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[39] VH 35

[40] NS 347, cf. The section on Herder below.

[41] Cecilia Miller, *Giambattista Vico: Imagination and Historical Knowledge* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p.4.

The Origins of Language

Vico starts his *New Science* with an analysis of the nature of primitive thought, historically and logically, and with an analysis of language and concept formation. His work on etymology is designed to uncover the birth of language, understood as the birth of man's mental activities; his analysis of the origins of language intended to justify our ability to think ourselves into other cultures via an understanding of etymology. He approaches the problem in terms of our embodiment and our concomitant perceptions. He argues that what he calls imaginative universals underlie intelligible universals. Imaginative universals, at the first order of approximation, are generated from picture thinking whereby we imagine ourselves into nature; we anthropomorphize it in a little fable based on how we are embodied and how we sensuously experience nature. Vico's example is: we imagine thunder to be Jove's wrath, "Jove" is thunder. Primordial man's ability to feel himself into the world allowed her to invent imaginative universals, and our embodiment allows us to take intelligible universals and think ourselves back into the imaginative universals that underlie them.[42]

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[42] As Lakoff and Johnson say, "The system of conceptual metaphor is not arbitrary or just historically contingent; rather, it is shaped to a significant extent by the common nature of our bodies and the shared way that we all function in the everyday world." George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p.247.

Vico's observation of the structures of human experience focuses on a study of perception in order to understand the original conditions of man's insertion in the world and the birth of man's mental activities. Because perception "is the primordial operation which impregnates sensible being with meaning" "all logical mediation as well as all psychological causality presupposes" this primordial operation. Perception is ontologically and epistemologically primary.[43] We must consider meaning as embodied. A disincarnated consciousness is as trite and impossible as an expressionless body. Vico contends, one should not study, on the one side disembodied consciousness, which only expresses, and, on the other, brute body, which supposedly only provides the raw material of the experiences to be expressed. Rather, their intertwining produces meaning. Vico writes: "words are carried over from bodies and from the properties of bodies to signify the institutions of the mind and the spirit."[44]

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[43] Vico prefigures Merleau-Ponty on this issue. See for instance McCleary's Preface, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, *Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.xii.

[44] FNS 252

Imaginative Universal

Modern thought, Vico argues, is different from ancient forms of thinking in its ability to form universals. In modern thought we move from particulars to universal using concepts and abstractions; we use what Vico terms the "intelligible universals," whereas the first humans used images—the "imaginative universals." Vico continues:

> when there is little use or no use of reasoning, the senses are robust; when the senses are robust the imagination is vivid; and a vivid imagination is the best painter of the images that objects imprint on the senses.[45]

Imaginative universals,[46] which are described by Vico as fables in brief, are dependent upon the poetic nature of the first men's thoughts. Imaginative universals are in many ways similar to what we now call metaphorical or imagistic thought, but should not be confused with analogical thinking.[47]

Sensibility is for Vico a form of thinking, an albeit different, or more primal way of thinking. This "sensory" thinking is, in turn, dependent upon the form of our body, which structures our perceptions of our life-world as

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[45] FNS 252

[46] See NS 499, 500, 929, 933-936 for Vico's conception of imaginative universals.

[47] See below in the section on "Metaphor."

well as our sensations.[48] Vico contends that these first images must be common to all men, imaginary universals common to all nations because we all share a common sensibility. Not only is later knowledge based on this sensory source of imaginative universals, but we still also have access to this primordial structure by reverse engineering the metaphorical transformations that connect the imaginative universals to later thinking. This access affords the basis for the possibility of empathetically feeling ourselves not only back into past cultures but also into cultures different from our own without importing misguided presuppositions.

With the imaginative universals men understand the world in terms of subjective qualities, anthropomorphically. Words were originally direct expressions of essential sensations related to bodily experiences. Even when working towards intangible objects and abstract concepts, people originally relied metaphorically on words relating to bodily experiences. Men saw nature as they saw themselves, animated by intention and emotions.

> It is note worthy that in all languages the greater part of the expression relating to inanimate things are formed by metaphor from the human body and its parts and for the human senses and passions. Thus, head for top or beginning; the brow and shoulders of a hill; the eyes of needles and potatoes; mouth for any opening; the lip of a cup or a pitcher; the teeth of a rake, a saw, a comb; the beard of

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[48] For Vischer too the form of our body plays a central role in the way we perceive objects. See the section on "Sensation" below.

> wheat; the tongue of a shoe; the gorge of a river; a neck of land; and arm of the sea; the hands of a clock; heart for center; the belly of a sail; foot for end or bottom; the flesh of fruits; a vein of rock or mineral; the blood of grapes for wine; the bowls of the earth.[49]

Our need to see ourselves in the world is in part driven by the poverty of our original vocabulary. "We further find that poetic expressions spring from two sources: the poverty of language, and the need to explain and be understood."[50] Thus imaginative universals go hand in hand with the metaphorical extension of language.

Language Extension through Metaphor

The next step in the development of language is dependent upon another of the *New Science's* axioms. When men were dependent upon such a restricted vocabulary, in order to give expression to new experiences they were forced to rely on what few words or signs they already possessed. Vico writes: "For a poverty of words naturally makes men sublime in expression,

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[49] NS 405. Vischer provides a detailed analysis of how we are able to project ourselves into the natural world. It is also remarkable how almost without exception these bodily images in Italian work in English, French, and German, at the very least, even unlikely ones, e.g., potato eyes. Also quoted in Marcel Danesi, *Giambattista Vico and Anglo-American Science: Philosophy and Writing*, *Approaches to Semiotics 119* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), p.133.

[50] NS 34

weighty in conception, and acute in understanding much in brief expression, which are the three most beautiful virtues of language."[51] He writes further,

> the necessity to express themselves for communicating their ideas to others, at a time when, because of a lack of words, the spirit is wholly engaged in findings ways to express itself, makes such mute men naturally ingenious. Hence they express themselves by means of things and actions that have natural relations with the ideas they want to signify.[52]

This expansion in the ability to express themselves required the creation of new usages for words. Thus, part and parcel of Vico's theory of Poetic Logic in Book II, is an analysis of tropes and a theory of metaphor. Metaphorical language is what enables man to proceed from known expressions that are related directly to sensory phenomena and to carry them over to wider more abstract thoughts. He writes

> All the first tropes are corollaries of this poetic logic. The most luminous and therefore the most necessary and frequent is metaphor. It is most praised when it gives sense and passion to insensate things, […] by which the poets attributed to bodies the being of animated substances, with capacities measured by their own, namely sense and passion, and in this way made fables for them. Thus every metaphor so formed is a fable in brief. This gives a basis for judging the time when metaphors made their appearance in the languages. All the metaphors conveyed by likeness taken from bodies to signify the operations of

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[51] FNS 250

[52] FNS 251

> abstract minds must date from times when philosophies were taking shape. The proof of this is that in every language the terms needed for the refined arts and recondite sciences are of rustic origin.[53]

In paragraph NS 460, Vico provides a simple example of this poetic and metaphorical use of bodily-related expressions expanded to mean something more abstract. When men were at a loss how to express "anger," he writes, they used a metaphorical poetic phrase, "the blood boils in my heart." From this he concludes that just as song preceded spoken language, metaphor and poetic language preceded prose, even in the vernacular. He writes:

> From all this it appears to have been demonstrated that, by a necessity of human nature, poetic style arose before prose style; just as, by the same necessity, the fables of imaginative universals arose before the rational or philosophic universal, [termed elsewhere — intelligible universal] which were formed through the medium of prose speech. For after the poets had formed poetic speech by associating particular ideas […] the peoples went on to form prose speech by contracting in a single word, as into a genus, the parts which poetic speech had associated.[54]

Thus in the example of "the blood boils in my heart" they took bodily properties common to all humans and contracted it into a single word—in Italian *collera*, anger, as if it were a genus. For, he explains further,

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[53] NS 404

[54] NS 460

> When men want to create ideas of things of which they are ignorant, they are naturally led to conceive them through resemblances with things that they know. And when there is a scarcity of known things, they judge the things of which they are ignorant in accordance with their own nature.[55]

The First Imaginative Universal

Vico explains that during the age of the gods, the epoch of what he calls the gentile peoples, "the minds of the first men of the gentile world took things one at the time, being in this respect little better than the minds of beasts, for each new sensation cancels the last one."[56] At this hypothetical primeval time, man is inserted in his life-world, but caught up and immersed in immediacy, in the incessant flow of perception. Vico searches for the event that opened up the existence of their world. He searches for the event that out of the inchoate sea of sensations makes place for a first representation. The structure of such an event gives us an understanding of signification per se.

If their world were only made up of "sense impressions" or "sense content" there would be no real perception at all because there would be only "one" perception. There must have been (again hypothetically) one crucial defining moment that produces a tear in the circularity of time; that gives rise to a

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[55] FNS 254

[56] NS 703

reference point in the incessant flow of sensations. Vico's example for such an event is man's confrontation with thunder and the fear that it occasions. The fright enables man to isolate an object out of man's immersion in nature.[57] This interruption in the flow of sensations allowed the mind to be fixed on an object before itself. Thus Jove, as representing thunder, Vico continues, represents the birth of the human mind. This event represents the first instance of a sensation that perdured, the first sensation that will not be cancelled by the following one and it actualizes the possibility of signifying: Jove is a sign. It also becomes a permanent reference point.[58] Vico writes:

> And because in such a case the nature of the human mind leads it to attribute its own nature to the effect, and because in that state their nature was that of men all robust bodily strength, who expressed their very violent passions by shouting and grumbling, they pictured the sky to themselves as a great animated body, which in that aspect they called Jove, the first god of the so-called greater gentes, who meant to tell them something by the hiss of his bolts and the clap of his thunder. And thus they began to exercise that natural curiosity which is the daughter of ignorance and the mother of knowledge.[59]

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[57] This is a genetic account not too dissimilar to the psychoanalytic account of the infant's entrance into the symbolic order. A first object arises for the neonate pursuant to an interruption of the symbiotic unity with its mother.

[58] NS 379, 383, 385, 387

[59] NS 377

The fear of thunder enables men to fix themselves on an object of sensation and isolate it, creating a "sensory topos" in which they can return to the object. "The mind, then, has place—a sensory topos—from which it can find again a basis for meaning in the placeless movement of sensation."[60] Jove is perceived as a *sign* from the great body of the heaven. Jove is the first imaginative universal. Later knowledge is based on this primordial topos.

The emotional character of the first sensation expressed by the first imaginative universal Jove, was one of the first poetic metaphors. One could contend that these metaphors—as expressions of sensations—were first derived from the body and became, second, transferred to a reality external to it. Thus the metaphors of the imaginative universal represents for Vico the way concept formation works, rather than being merely a product or even an extension of an already available language. Or as James Edie contends:

> [E]very word was originally a designation of a concrete world phenomenon, that it called forth an extremely concrete image, that it was primarily a gesture. Words themselves are intra-mundane events; they are *point d'appui* for thought; on the basis of such lived image-gestures thought can go forward. This is what we mean when we say that if thought is analyzed into its *primitive elements*, we will find not logical structures (which are in actuality highly derived and much later) but the

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[60] Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination* , p.172.

> experienced life-world itself as the a priori condition of any expression whatsoever.[61]

The first imaginative universal —Jove— is the first thought, from which subsequent descriptive terms derive through the further use of metaphorical speech.

As James Edie points out, Vico's theory is a non-rationalistic theory of metaphor, and "it should free us once and for all from the rationalistic search for the *tertium quid comparationis* as the key to understanding metaphors. Metaphors are much more than a sub-class of analogy."[62] The metaphor of "the blood boils in my heart" does not contain any middle term. Neither the word nor the concept for anger is available. "Vico […] most importantly challenges the ancient notion of metaphor as transferred meaning, that in the trope of metaphor what is literally so in one context is transferred into another context in which its meaning is not literal."[63] Thus the explicit thought that anger is like a sort of heat in the body just isn't available. The metaphorical expansion of language works like a fable that imaginatively narrates what we now understand by anger.

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[61] James M. Edie, "Expression and Metaphor," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 23, no. 4 (1963), p.51.

[62] Ibid. n.12 p.549

[63] Danesi, *Giambattista Vico and Anglo-American Science: Philosophy and Writing,* p.205.

For Vico metaphors are linked to identity, rather than to the similarity in dissimilar at work in analogies. His theory of metaphor anticipates later theories, which seek to emphasize the primal perception of identity subtending the structure of metaphors rather than their analogical structures. Cohen and Nagle describe metaphor as follows

> It would be an error […] to regard every metaphor as an explicitly formulated analogy, in which the words of comparison, "like," "as," and so on, are omitted. This presupposes that the recognition of the literal truth precedes the metaphor, which is thus always a conscious transference of the properties of one thing to another. But history shows that metaphors are generally older than the expressed analogies […]. Metaphors may thus be viewed as expressing the vague and confused but primal perception of identity, which subsequent processes of discrimination transform into a conscious and expressed analogy between different things, and which further reflection transforms into the clear assertion of an identity or common element (or relation) which the two different things possess.[64]

The thunder *is* Jove and "this identity between the elements of this first thought is that presupposed in the logical argument."[65] This ability of the nascent consciousness to produce this first *is* is how consciousness produces itself in opposition to the first object. The presence of this first identity within

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[64] Cohen and Nagel, *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method* (New York: Harcourt, 1934), p.369.

[65] Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, p.174.

the first thought is, for Vico, crucial for it is what underlies further metaphors. This *is* or identity

> appears from the first moment with a double meaning—as *being* and as *copula*, as permanence and as relation. In the imaginative universal something *is* for the mind, whereas otherwise there exists only the nothing of sensation influx.[66]

Or, as Verene puts it further,

> Metaphor can be understood as likeness or similarity only if we ignore its role in relation to the *is*. To regard the constructive power of the metaphor as based on its analogical capacity is also to presuppose its primordial power to construct the *is*.[67]

This primordial metaphor, which has the power of constructing the *is,* subtends all further activities of the mind.[68]

Feeling Oneself into and back to Jove

Vico's project is to provide a philosophical underpinning for his new approach to the human sciences—his new science. In order to discover a

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[66] Ibid. p.173

[67] Ibid. p.174

[68] Vico is in effect taking a stand on the perennial question of the origin of language: Is language natural, or do we not need a rational faculty to understand language in the first place? For him, the origins of language and reason are both natural and stem from the way we are embodied in a world and share that world and the experiences in it with others. Intelligible universals require reason and vice versa, but imaginative universals require neither.

methodology appropriate to a history that does not just simply impose supposedly universal laws onto other times and places, nor gives up the hope of us ever understanding cultures foreign to us, he wants to find a way for us to "entrare," to enter into other cultures. His justification for our ability to enter into other cultures rests on his analysis of how metaphor and imaginative universals underlie our concept formation and our experience of the being of the world. Vico effectively argues that we can enter into other cultures because of an original ability to feel ourselves into the world that underlies the working of metaphor.

Primary imaginative universals are common to all. They are the *loci* of the mental dictionary that is at the origin of Vico's *Sensus Communis*. They represent the primary operations of the mind, regulated by the faculty of imagination. In Vico's words:

> So that we may truly say that the first age of the world occupies itself with the primary operation of the mind. And first it began to hew out topics, which is an art of regulating well the primary operation of our mind by noting the *commonplaces* that must be run over in order to know all there is in a thing that one desires to know well; that is completely.[69]

A return to these *commonplaces* is thus, for Vico, what enables the recollective ability of memory. The *Sensus Communis* and imaginative universals are shared by all humans in all nations due to their origins in our

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[69] NS 496, emphasis added.

embodied experience of the life-world. Through the process of feeling ourselves into imaginative universals, on the basis of their expression in other ways by other cultures, we can thus recollect the ingredients for other times and places. I suggest that we should call this process "empathetic imagination" on the ground that our "recollection" of the past is made possible by our faculty of imagination through our ability to *feel ourselves into* the metaphorical structure subtending all mental activities.[70]

More important for my project, however, is the other side of empathy, namely, the original ability to feel myself into the thunder that underpins all metaphor.

> Heaven or the sea smiles; the wind whistles; the wave murmurs; the body groans under great weight. […] All of which is a consequence of our axiom that man in his ignorance makes himself the rule of the universe, for in the examples cited he has made of himself an entire world. So that, as rational metaphysics teaches that man becomes all things by understanding them, this imaginative metaphysics shows that man becomes all things by *not* understanding them; and perhaps the latter proposition is truer than the former for when man understands he extends his mind and takes in the things, but when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them.[71]

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[70] Verene suggests "recollective fantasia." Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, p.155. Isaiah Berlin proposes "reconstructive imagination," VH 107, 113-114.

[71] NS 405

Our ability to feel ourselves into the natural world is thus the foundation for metaphor and all thought, a foundation that rests on our embodiment and sensory capacity that only later gives rise to reason. Vischer, in his analysis of aesthetic experience, fleshes out the mechanisms by which we make this primordial transfer.

Johann Gottfried Herder 1744-1803

Introduction

In this section, I expound on Herder's hermeneutic and the role played by *Einfühlung* in Herder's genetic method, especially in the section on his *This too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity*. For now, suffice it to say that the progressive elaboration of the concept of "feeling oneself into" is dependent upon and thus runs parallel to the elaboration of the genetic method. As the elaboration of Herder's genetic method's technicality increases, his concept of *Einfühlung* itself gains in complexity.

"Empathetic imagination" is the term I coined for Vico's method of historical recollection through the use of "fantasia." Vico's process of imaginative recollection can be seen as a forerunner of the concept of "*sich einfühlen*" coined by Herder some thirty years later. For Vico, the phenomenon of recollection enabled by the "imaginative universals" was dependent upon all men and all nations having a commonality of vocabulary, a commonality of the first terms that gave rise to the mind's activity. The phenomenon of feeling oneself into depends upon sharing a mental dictionary. Because we share symbols and images, we can effect a metaphorical displacement into the perceptual or affective contexts of others. Herder's theory of historical and language development also tries to reconcile the opposing positions of universalism and singularity. This position has been

described by Berlin, Taylor,[72] and Barnard[73] as a forerunner of political pluralism. Herder's "pluralism" stems from his criticism of his contemporaries for the ways in which they abstract the living human being from its environment (*Klima*) and because they tend to

> toss around general words and formulas in the midst of which all forceful distinctions and individual beings disappear; bind contradictions with general words and daub over with loose whitewash. [Because they] Know so much about the human soul in general that they know nothing about each individual human soul.[74]

Herder's theory of history and language propounds a pluralism not elaborated in terms of all encompassing universalities, nor an obliterating of differences, but rather a pluralism that celebrates differences while simultaneously enabling people to work together towards a better world, so

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[72] See Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[73] Barnard's writing on Herder include: F. M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought; from Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought; from Enlightenment to Nationalism* , Johann Gottfried Herder and F. M. Barnard, *J. G. Herder on Social and Political Culture*, *Cambridge Studies in the History and Theory of Politics* (London: Cambridge U.P., 1969); F. M. Barnard, *Self-Direction and Political Legitimacy: Rousseau and Herder* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1988); and F. M. Barnard, *Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History*, *Mcgill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas 35* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

[74] Johann Gottfried Herder, "On Cognition and Sensation, the Two Main Forces of the Human Soul (1775)," in *Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.183.

as to enhance what Vischer will later term *Menschenmitdasei*n. The question Herder is answering is, in his own words:

> Will I, therefore, ever be able to feel apart and together, i.e. to explain, the harmony of our being, the mutually attuned and yet so diverse concert of our thoughts and sensations?[75]

Einfühlung is the process by which we will be, in Herder's system, able to feel apart while feeling together. Through *Einfühlung,* we will be able to access the similarities due not only to shared embodiment, corporeal experiences, and concept formation, but also due to a careful and critical analysis of the social interactions and of the *Klimas* in which specific languages develop and by which they are shaped. The recollecting of the commonalities among differences in human experience that are at the heart of our ability to work towards a common goal is, for Herder, facilitated by the process of feeling oneself into.

For Herder, thought is itself necessarily dependent upon language. Language and concept formation are the necessary tools enabling, first, an access *to* and, second, an interpretation *of* human values since language and concept formation are dependent upon human usage of words, for Herder, as

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[75] Ibid. p.182

for Vico[76] before him. To sum it up, Herder's philosophy of history is a philosophy of the history of languages, not understood in terms of structures, but rather in terms of *"Werdegang,"* in terms of development. Herder's philosophical history for mankind is a history of mankind's language's development embedded in a particular "climate." Herder does not see mankind's historical "here" as a mathematical coordinate, nor mankind's "now" as a historical moment, but, rather, for Herder the here and now are embodied and embedded in a particular context.

Perceptual Rootedness of Language

The relation between language, imagination, reflection, and understanding is addressed in Herder's treatise "On the Origin of Language"[77]—in which, in contradistinction to J. P. Süssmilch,[78] he dismisses

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[76] Even if, in fact, Herder did not have access to Vico's thought on the matter until 1797. For this point I am indebted to F. M. Barnard, *J. G. Herder on Social and Political Culture* (London: Cambridge U.P., 1969), n.5 p.110. It is possible however that some of Vico's reflections on language might have been transmitted to Herder through Hamman, as mentioned by Isaiah Berlin, VH 165.

[77] *Über den Ursprung der Sprache*, written in 1770 for the Akademie competition in Berlin and published in 1772. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Michael N. Forster, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.65-164, volume hereafter abbreviated as PW.

the divine origin of language—going as far as calling this hypothesis historically and philosophically insupportable. In his treatise, Herder takes a position not all too dissimilar to Dietrich Tiedemann's in his *Versuch einer Erklärung des Ursprung der Sprache*.[79] Herder promotes a historical approach between the Charybdis of reductionism and the Scylla of supernaturalism. The main disagreement between Tiedemann and Herder is that Tiedemann believed in pre-linguistic knowledge, whereas Herder does not. For Tiedemann "we first have representations and only later give name to them."[80] Herder finds fault with this hypothesis, for, he contends, reason no more than God could devise language. The emergence of language cannot be attributed to pre-given human reason. There is no preeminent power of reason drafting a subsequent language. Rather, they are coterminous. Thought and language occur simultaneously. Herder writes, "We cannot

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[78] J. P. Süssmilch, *Versuch Ein Beweises, Dass Die Erste Sprache Ihren Ursprung Nicht Von Menschen, Sondern Allein Vom Schöpfer Erhalten Habe* (Berlin: Realbuchlandlung, 1766).

[79] Dietrich Tiedemann, *Versuch Einer Erklärung Des Ursprunges Der Sprache*, Reprograf. Dr. d. Ausg. Riga, Hartknoch, 1772. ed. (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1978).

[80] Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, p.135.

think without words," "Each nation speaks in the manner it thinks and thinks in the manner it speaks."[81]

Herder contends that thought and language are coeval. He writes "thought sticks itself to the expression and forms itself according to the latter.[82]" But since thought and reason is neither anterior nor prior to expression and language, Herder must tread carefully if he is to give us a genetic account of language acquisition while not simultaneously contradicting himself.[83] The following excerpt from his treatise is worth quoting at length:

> The human being demonstrates reflection when the forces of his soul operates so freely that in the whole ocean of sensations which floods the soul through all the senses it can, so to speak, separate

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[81] Johann Gottfried Herder, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Bernhard Ludwig Suphan, Reprograf. ed. (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1881-1913), Vol. I p.420 and Vol. II p.18.

[82] PW 48

[83] The details of this balancing act do not concern us. I am only concerned with the implications of Herder's analysis of the origins of language in so far as it is relevant to empathy. Suffice it to say that the way language is tied into perception cannot be that we have a proto-understanding that reason then universalizes. That would make reason prior to language, which Herder emphatically denies. For a full discussion see Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, p.79ff. Michael N. Forster, "Herder's Philosophy of Language, Interpretation and Translation: Three Fundamental Principles," *The Review of Metaphysics* 56, no. December (2002), and Michael N. Forster, "Herder's Importance as a Philosopher," in *Von der Logik zur Sprache, Stuttgarter Hegel-Kongress*, ed. Rüdiger Bubner and Gunnar Hindrichs (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005).

> off, stop, and pay attention to a single wave, and be conscious of its own attentiveness. The human being demonstrates reflection when out of the whole hovering dream of images which proceed before his senses, he can collect himself into a moment of alertness, freely dwell on a single image, pay it clear, more leisurely heed, and separate off characteristic marks for the fact that it is that object and no other. […] This *first characteristic mark of taking-awareness was a word of the soul! With it human language is invented.*[84]

Usage and Displacement

The paramount implication of this quote is that that language is grounded in in perception. Indeed, as he writes further, "all our thinking arose from and through sensations, and also still bears, despite all distillation, rich traces of it."[85] Still, even if words arise out of sensations, Herder also writes, "our sensation is always accompanied with a sort of cognition."[86] There is, thus, an interplay between language and sensation; there is a certain decisive moment where the human being pays attention,[87] where out of "the chaos of

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[84] PW 87-88

[85] PW 242

[86] PW 178

[87] Similar to the moment of wonder giving rise to thought in Aristotle. "For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first begun to philosophize." Meta 982b12.

things,"[88] out of the "ocean of sensations," one "dwells on a single image" and thus language or what Herder calls in the above quote the "word of the soul"[89] is born.[90] In this, Herder anticipated Merleau-Ponty, who later wrote, "*Consciousness is inseparable from its expression* (consequently, it is inseparable from the cultural whole of its milieu.)"[91] Thus conceptual formation—as word of the soul—and language are anchored in the perceptual. Since they are anchored in the perceptual, concepts are determined by the usage of words. Concepts are neither identical to objects, nor to mental ideas, nor to platonic forms and are as such subject to displacement.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty exemplifies the inaccuracies resulting from the lack of awareness of the importance of context or word-usage, as well as of the possibility of displacement with the example of the French expression, "*ne pas faire*." "*Ne pas faire*" means—to not do something. More precisely,

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[88] PW 118

[89] Please note that Herder uses interchangeably "word of the soul," "reflection" or "consciousness," and "apperception."

[90] Or, to anticipate later theories of language, one figure against the ground.

[91] Merleau-Ponty is here discussing Scheler. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, *Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.46.

Merleau-Ponty's example is about *"pas,"* meaning "not." Merleau-Ponty explicates the sliding of the sense of the expression as follows:

> the negation *pas* in French started out being a word which designated the progression of a man walking (*je ne fais pas,* meaning 'I do not advance a step.') It is by a slipping that the word *pas* took on its negative meaning.[92]

Someone unaware of this displacement of meaning might not understand at all what is meant by the expression. This is just one illustration of the difficulties faced by any interpretation of texts from other epochs.

As language is dependent upon word usage, and as there remains in concepts some aspects of perception, one needs to be able to track down these roots by *feeling oneself into* someone else's text. One needs to recollect their feelings, their perceptual world. As Merleau Ponty further writes, "One cannot become the other *really*, but one can become him intentionally. One can reach others through all the expressive manifestations by which they give themselves to us." An imaginative recapturing of another person's world is only possible because we share a perceptual world—although we do not share perceptions. The experience of *Einfühlung* is dependent upon the structure of *Leiblichkeit.* Sensation is not only the basis upon which our conceptual framework unfolds,

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[92] Ibid. p.81

but it is what enables the phenomenon of *feeling oneself into* someone else. Or as Merleau Ponty writes in *Signs* "*Einfühlung* goes from body to mind."[93]

Embeddedness of the Text

In 1767, three years before crafting his essay on language, Herder was already working on his genetic method for the introduction to the 1st edition of the *Fragments on Recent German Literature*.[94] This introduction centered on the question, "How can we proceed methodologically in order to be able to judge a work of literature?" Herder, in effect, asks: "What is the method used by the critic in order to understand, not only the content, but also the intentions of the author?" His answer seems at first very obvious and simple—by working *from within* the text. We have seen that the critic must understand the historical and cultural context of the author. Now Herder emphasizes the linguistic embeddeness of the text. Thus, the critic is not only working philologically, but she must also concern herself with the text's sister texts. The critic needs to hold not only the author as embodied, but also the text as embedded. The first step for the critic should be to *feel herself into* the text *per se*, then into the author's whole corpus, in order for the critic be able

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[93] Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p.169.

[94] Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. II, pp.1-110. Excerpts in Herder, *Philosophical Writings* pp.33-64. Hereafter "*Fragments.*"

to follow the author's' goals and purposes and to be able to identify with the author's values. This first step is, however, not sufficient and in his revised second edition of the *Fragments* from 1768, Herder, adds a new stage to his elaboration and includes the concept of history.

History and Context

Human products, like natural things, are not eternal—they originate, they grow, and finally they decay. Human products must thus be understood as historically determined. The contention that human products have a history, while echoing Vico, is due to an acquaintance with Kant's early 1755 essay entitled *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*.[95] Incorporating Kant's insight into his own methodology, Herder writes:

> Just as a tree grows from its roots, so art, language, and science grow from their origins. In the seed there lies the creature with all its members; and in the origin of a phenomenon there lies all the treasure of its interpretation, through which our explanation of it becomes *genetic*.[96]

Thus, in the early introduction to his *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity,* published in 1774, Herder furthered his inquiry into

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[95] Immanuel Kant, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, trans. Stanley L. Jaki (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1981). See Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*.

[96] Herder, *Sämtliche Werke* Vol. II, pp.1-110, translated by Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte,* p.142. Emphasis added.

human activities and introduces historicity.[97] As the title indicates, this essay treats of the dynamics of the historical development of humanity and was written in part as a reaction to essays from Voltaire, Montesquieu, Boulanger and Helvetius. What irritates Herder, to the point of rendering him polemical, as seen by the choice of title for his essay "This too…" is that the historical analysis of his peers disregarded the climate of the time they were observing. Hume, for instance, wrote, "Mankind are so much the same in all times and places that history informs us of nothing new or strange."[98] The observations of contemporary historians are compromised, Herder writes, "because they judge, on the basis of the spirit and heart of our time."[99] Moreover, "we *mock,* we *deny*, we *misinterpret*" because "we are so incapable of understanding! *of feeling!*"[100] In reaction, Herder propounds a historical analysis that respects time, place, and culture, i.e. a history embedded in particularity. We need to work not from our own perspective, he continues, but rather with

> *the criterion of another time!* […] In order to understand the historical or cultural other, […] it really ought to be one's first thought to see him

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[97] Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, pp.268-271.

[98] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Antony Flew, *Paul Carus Student Editions* (La Salle: Open Court, 1988), p.121.

[99] PW 278

[100] PW 278, italicized in original.

> merely in his place, otherwise one sees, especially looking hither from Europe, the most distorted caricature.[101]

Here Herder introduces context or "climate" into his method. He writes:

> That there is a certain creation and influence by the clime, hence certain national and provincial vices, forces and virtues; that in some regions and climates some inclinations, like some plants, must develop only weakly and shapelessly, but in others strive upwards with whole full nature—I may presuppose this physic of history, science of the soul, and politics as conceded on the whole […][102]

Feeling Oneself into and the Genetic Method

Herder seeks to give a special importance to what he terms "climate." Climate here is not to be understood as the horizon or the *Umgebung* surrounding the epoch studied, since it also includes perceptual and psychological components. Without a feeling into the climate, there is no access to the word of a people. Again, since thought is dependent upon language and concepts are dependent upon word usages, addressing the "climate" will be the first necessary step toward the possibility of *feeling oneself into* the thought of an epoch. Herder writes:

> Whoever has noticed what an *inexpressible thing* one is dealing with in the *distinctive individuality of a* human being—to be able to *say what*

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[101] PW 282, italicized in original.

[102] PW 268-269

> *distinguishes him in a distinguishing way*, how he feels and lives, how *different* and *idiosyncratic* all things become for him once *his* eye sees them, *his* soul measures them, *his* heart feels them—[…] and feels along.[103]

Herder is now concerned with an understanding of other cultures and other peoples through the process of "feeling oneself into" the climate specific to a particular life. In his words:

> The whole living painting of mode of life, habits, needs, peculiarities of land and climate, would have to *be added* […] go into the age, into the clime, the whole history, *feel yourself into* everything—only now are you on the way towards understanding.[104]

Here to "feel oneself into" is a tool enabling an understanding and interpretation of the foreign. Or as Heinz Kohut would aptly write later:

> Empathy is the mode by which one gathers psychological data about other people and […] imagines their inner experiences even though it is not open to direct observation.[105]

Herder's genetic method not only relies on first "feeling oneself into" the literary work, but it is also dependent upon a dynamic interpretation of the context of the author—the second stage of *Einfühlung*. The critic's methodological framework will hence become archeological in nature—the

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[103] PW 291, italicized in original.

[104] PW 291-2, first emphasis his, second mine.

[105] From Heinz Kohut, "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism," *Journal American Psychoanalytical Association,* , no. 14 (1966):262. Quoted in *Lichtenberg, Bornstein, and Silver, Empathy,* Volume I, p.13.

critic unearths meanings and discovers systems of values through an imaginative displacement into the context of the author. This context, in turn, will be analyzed in terms of human productions and associations. This addition of a diachronic dimension is the second stage of Herder's genetic method.

The conceptual elaboration of the genetic method so far runs as follows:

—First step: The method includes the concepts of following and identifying with. It calls for a movement on the part of the critic into the literary text of the author. This metaphorical displacement occurs first at the level of the text embeddeness in the whole corpus of the author, and further into the author's perceptual and affective world, this is done through *feeling oneself into*.

—Second step—Inclusion of the concept of history. Human products are historically determined. Thus in order to have access to the perceptual and affective world of the author one needs to consider the historical context in which it took place and *feel oneself into* it. Access to understanding is thus facilitated by "*sich einfühlen,"* by reproducing in imagination the perceptions/sensations of the targeted "other." The historian thus actively

interprets and "feels himself into" the other cultural and/or[106] emotional framework. Yet one caveat remains.

—Third Step—The historian needs to suspend his moral standards, he needs to bracket himself in order to avoid anachronism, in order to mitigate the tendency to infuse the past civilization with values and preconceptions of our own. Herder writes "It is completely necessary that one be able to leave one's own time and one's own people in order to judge about remote times and peoples."[107] Herder warns the historian saying that only then "will you [the historian] loose the thought 'as though you too are all that taken individually or collectively.' You taken collectively? *Quintessence of all times and peoples?* That really shows stupidity!"[108] The historian needs to relegate his situatedness to the background in order for the interpretation to be valid. In this way, Herder brings attention to the problem inherent with the situatedness of the historian as well as to the problems related to the access to the object studied.

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[106] It is not necessary for the possibility of *Einfühlung* that there be a specific emotion that would then be shared in by both. One can feel oneself into the other framework of references—its environment. It is not necessarily a shared emotional content.

[107] PW 62. Here Herder is following Vico who ask that the agent of a historical reconstruction be "asked" to perform a kind of emptying or bracketing of the self. See p.23 above.

[108] PW 292

Only when the historian succeeds in removing herself and her sets of beliefs, balancing herself between subject and object, can he achieve an understanding of the intentions underlying the behaviors observed in different cultures (or past civilizations)—why was something done, and for what reasons? Only once this is done can the historian recognize and follow the motives that caused a specific action, or understand how a set of traditions originated and perdured. One needs to enter the world of values and beliefs, which provide the climate against which a culture unfolded. Summarizing Herder's hermeneutic project, Isaiah Berlin writes that

> One must not judge one culture by the criteria of another, that different civilizations have different growths, pursue different goals, embody different ways of living, are dominated by different attitudes to life; so that to understand them one must perform an imaginative act of empathy into their essence, understand them 'from within' as far as possible and see the world through their eyes.[109]

Conclusion

The emphasis on "climate" as determinant for a specific system of values was not *en vogue* in the philosophical historical inquiries of the 18th century. Indeed, the inquiries into history, which were proliferating at the time, were not only ahistorical but also Eurocentric in nature, as is exemplified by the citation from Hume quoted above. Herder's intervention was thus radical and

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[109] VH 210

innovative. Berlin writes: "Herder is one of the originators of the secular doctrine of the unity of facts and value, theory and practice, "is" and "ought," intellectual judgment and emotional commitment, thoughts and actions."[110] Clarifying Herder's position in the essay *This too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity*,[111] Berlin continues: "Herder […] warns against moral evaluation and urges the critic above all to understand that if one must condemn and praise, this should be done only after an exercise of sympathetic insight—of one's capacity for *Einfühlen*."[112] Berlin writes, further, to feel oneself into the essence of societies is:

> to grasp what it must be like to live, contemplate goals, act and react, think, imagine, in the unique ways dictated by their circumstances, and so grasp the patterns of life in terms of which alone these groups are to be defined.[113]

Thus, to summarize, Herder's introduction of the concept of "feeling oneself into" is relevant to the genealogy of *Einfühlung* because he extended how it is that the contextual and historical worlds are a part of the process of language and concept formation, and thus, interpretation. Herder contended that thought is bounded by and dependent upon language, thus for recollection

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[110] VH 154

[111] Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, pp.272-369.

[112] VH 187

[113] VH 173

and interpretation to be possible, one needs to rely upon language and concept formation. We have shown that for him concepts are neither identical with objects nor with forms nor ideas. They are dependent upon word-usage. Word-usage is in turn tied into context or, in Herder's word, climate. Both are anchored in the perceptual or the affective, i.e., it is determined by sensations. Thus recollection and interpretation through *Einfühlung* are methodologically justified in Herder's methodology through his elaboration of the partly perceptual origin of language. Indeed, in Herder, recollecting is similar to an empathetic imagination, but a recapturing that does not involve a "sharing" of the original content of sensation. Through his emphasis on the necessity of the historian remaining detached from the object of his observation, Herder is indeed pointing towards a critical aspect of the phenomenon of *Einfühlung*. In *Einfühlung,* I have access to an experience whose content is non-primordial (i.e. there is no mineness to the content of that experience). Nevertheless the recollection occurring through the process of *Einfühlung* allows me to gain access to the prior givenness of that experience, but in a non-primordial manner. For Herder, *Einfühlung* and the access to the content of the other's experience is facilitated by language. We will now see how the aesthetic experience can also facilitate it.

Chapter 2

Empathy and the Aesthetic Object

Robert Vischer 1847-1933

Introduction

Before analyzing the historical and philosophical underpinnings of Robert Vischer's notion of *Einfühlung*, a few remarks on terminology are necessary. While the translation by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou is excellent, some of the connotations of the German are inevitably lost in English.[114]

First and foremost, the translation of the substantive *Einfühlung* as empathy carries with it some difficulties. Vischer coins it to denote a process. Consequently, Vischer uses the verb *sich einfühlen* more often than the noun. In German, the verb *sich einfühlen* is reflexive. One feels *oneself* in the object of the aesthetic experience. Two remarks are relevant here. The first concerns the "in," the second concerns the "oneself." First, one feels oneself *in* the object. English uses "with"—one empathizes with something. While this detail may seem at first unimportant, it is the source of many confusions. The

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[114] *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, *Texts & Documents* (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; Distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 1994).

preposition "with" used in connection with empathy leads to an association of empathy with "sym"pathy, bringing a dimension of similarity in kind where there is often none. Inanimate objects, such as aesthetic objects, are, in Vischer's words, "too remote in kind" for them to elicit feelings of sympathy. Empathy is a more general state of awareness. When Vischer is analyzing the role of empathy in aesthetic experience, the empathy involved can in no case be described as a state of concern for an object or with a specific condition. For Vischer, the subject cannot feel *with or for* inanimate objects, however, a process of feeling *in* is indeed possible and takes place quite often, often without our acknowledging it. The difficulty, therefore, for the English reader is to disregard associations related to the use of the preposition *with*.[115]

While talk of "feeling oneself into" an object might at first seems downright bizarre, Vischer and his contemporaries find it in a wide range of experiences. To see why, it helps to think in terms of natural phenomena and, in fact, in order to illustrate this somewhat often unconscious and elusive phenomenon, Vischer has recourse throughout his essay to such phenomena. We experience the alteration of the sense of self while walking on the beach

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[115] The problem of the similarity or dissimilarity in kind will not be present in the section on Stein's elaboration of the concept of empathy because her dissertation was focusing directly on intersubjectivity and thus on the process of feeling oneself into the content of the another subject's experience.

with the immensity of the open water and infinite horizon on a regular basis. Similarly, buildings have an effect on us. For instance, gothic churches architecturally endeavor to produce a sentiment of limitation and smallness in comparison to the greatness and magnitude of God. Likewise, fascist architecture strives to produce a diminished sense of self in relation to the grandiosity and imposing character of the buildings.[116]

The second remark centers on the reflexivity of the verb *einfühlen*. One feels *oneself* into the object. The empathetic interaction with the object, taking place during the aesthetic experience, represents, for Vischer, one of

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[116] Two contemporaries of Vischer did in fact address the phenomenon of *Einfühlung* and architecture. The first, Heinrich Wöllflin, was profoundly influenced by Vischer in his 1886 Heinrich Wölfflin, "Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture," in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; Distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 1994). The second, August Schmarsow elaborated the concept of architecture as the creatress of space in his 1893 essay, August Schmarsow, "On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics," in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, op. cit. His emphasis was on the importance of the psychological experience of a building's interior space. He defended the position that the most important concern of architecture was not, as previously thought, the formal characteristics and proportions of the building but rather the ways in which the building —as a created space— was able to enclose the subject. Very important here and relevant to our inquiry into Vischer's theory of *Einfühlung* is that Schmarsow defended the position that due to our embodiment and corporeality rather than vision alone, spatial projection is always already an internal projection of sensations eliciting various types of feelings. The experience of the spatiality of architectural buildings was for him conditioned by the feeling of oneself *into* and *within*.

the ways in which the subject is able to experience its subjectivity anew. One could say that in the aesthetic experience, the projection, exchange, and return taking place enables the subject to see itself sitting in the object and reintroject itself but in a way reshaped, changed and differently constituted. The lack of reflexivity in "empathizing" in English leads one to overlook the role played by empathy in the constitution of the subject. There is a corresponding, but opposite difficulty with *Einempfindung* [sensing into]. *Einempfinden* is not a reflexive verb in German. *Einempfindung* is the process by which a harmony between the objectival form and the subjectival one takes place. As such, no sense of self is required. It is therefore confusing when the translators introduce a reflexive pronoun to accompany it. In the German, there is no, "sensing *oneself* into."

The Concept of Empathy in German Aesthetics

The rise of æsthetic formalism in nineteenth century Germany had its roots in Kantian philosophy.[117] Kant's assertion that pure beauty is the beauty of form founded two different interpretations. The first, the Hegelian, found the source of our æsthetic pleasure in the form as the bearer of the

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[117] On the role played by Kant in the debate of form and space at the center of German æsthetics between 1873 and 1893 see Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, "Introduction," in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893,* op. cit.

Idea. The second, the Herbartian (Johann Friedrich Herbart 1776-1841) found the source of our esthetic pleasure in form, considered as mathematical relations.

Written in reaction to the formalism of esthetics propounded by the Herbartians and Hegelians, Robert Vischer's dissertation followed in the steps of his father—Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807-1887). While the formalists described the beauty of an object in terms of its intrinsic formal qualities, F. T. Vischer, in opposition to their approach, argued that the beauty of an aesthetic object is dependent not only on its form but also its symbolic content, on its ability to represent an idea by other means. F. T. Vischer's insight is to suggest that symbolic content is dependent on the viewers projecting themselves into the object's form. F. T. Vischer therefore begins his analysis of aesthetic experience by investigating symbolism. He contends that symbolism must be placed at the beginning of any æsthetic theory because it is the "universal human form, psychologically necessary, based in the essence of imagination."[118] Robert Vischer's essay, while strongly influenced by his father's work on symbolism, proposes to investigate the perception of forms in terms of what and how the forms can, in the viewer, elicit feelings. With his essay, Robert Vischer moves from a purely aesthetical

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[118] "Kritik meiner Aesthetik," in Friedrich Theodor von Vischer, *Kritische Gänge*, Neue Folge. ed. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1861), p.141.

question to a psychological question about of the subject and its mechanisms of perception. The subject—the viewer—involved in the aesthetic contemplation is not as much analyzed from a logical perspective as from an embodied one. And being embodied is a condition for the possibility of the phenomenon of empathy.

Friedrich Theodor Vischer 1807-1887

Friedrich Theodor Vischer was a prolific writer,[119] a formidable man, very active in the political arena of his time.[120] Starting as a privatdozent at the university of Tübingen, he was advanced to extraordinary professor in 1837 and became full professor at university from 1844. Due to his outspoken

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[119] Besides his habilitation's thesis on the sublime and the comic published in 1837, Friedrich Theodor von Vischer, *Über Das Erhabene Und Komische, Ein Beitrag Zu Der Philosophie Des Schönen* (Stuttgart: Imle & Krauss, 1837) to which Freud refers in jokes and the unconscious, his Magnus opus on æsthetics, the six volumes of *Aesthetics; or, The Science of the Beautiful*, Friedrich Theodor von Vischer, *Aesthetik, Oder Wissenschaft Des Schönen* (Reutlingen und Leipzig: C. Mäcken, 1846), F.T. Vischer wrote essays—mostly collected in Vischer, *Kritische Gänge* , poems, for instance—Friedrich Theodor von Vischer, *Auch Einer. Eine Reisebekanntschaft* (Stuttgart und Leipzig: Deutsche verlagsanstalt, 1900), a study of Goethe's Faust, Friedrich Theodor von Vischer, *Göthes Faust* (Stuttgart: A. Bonz & comp., 1876) and in 1887 an essay on the symbol—"Das Symbol," found in Friedrich Theodor von Vischer, *Altes Und Neues*, Neue Folge. ed. (Stuttgart: A. Bonz & Comp., 1889), in which he incorporated the tenets of his son's dissertation and revised his previous positions.

[120] F. T. Vischer was a parliamentary member of the Frankfurt convention of 1848, which proposed to unify the German state.

inaugural address[121] he was suspended for two years by the Württemberg government. In this highly sarcastic harangue, F. T. Vischer

> expressed his contempt for certain demagogic adversaries, police surveillance, the mechanization of art, the potentially enfeebling effect of all the glyptotheks and pinakotheks (he preferred to see art galleries set aflame than to have art threatened by state wealth) and—above all—the 'sanctified' order of the state.[122]

It is during these two years of suspension that F. T. Vischer started to write his *Aesthetics; or, The Science of the Beautiful.*[123] In the six volumes, which were published between 1846 and 1857, F. T. Vischer reintroduced the subject into the perceptual act, endowing forms with emotional content. He contends that it is thanks to a symbolic transfer that the forms are endowed with emotional content. F. T. Vischer's æsthetic thus aims to elucidate this transfer of content by analyzing the notion of the symbol.

F.T. Vischer follows Hegel's depiction of symbolic art. For Hegel, symbolic art works at early cultural stages. The symbol is as an artifice to which the mind needs to resort in order to express its spiritual ideas in terms of

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[121] This 1844 address as well as the defense of it written in 1845 were both published in Vischer, *Kritische Gänge*, p.130-81.

[122] *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, p.18.

[123] Vischer, *Aesthetik, Oder Wissenschaft Des Schönen*.

images.[124] For Hegel, what characterizes the symbol is the inadequation (*Unangemessenheit)* between the idea, the signification, the content, and the expression of this content, its image, the form, the symbol.

For F. T. Vischer, symbolism ensues from the connection between an image and an idea by the intermediary of an association. In normal associations, one always consciously keeps a clear distinction between the two sides of the association, whereas in the symbolism at work in the aesthetic experience there is not always a clear distinction.

For F. T. Vischer, there are three stages of symbolic activity. The first level of symbolism is a primitive symbolism — one in which the connection between the idea and the image is unconscious, involuntary and obscure. The symbols of primitive religions, for instance, an image is identified, even confused with the idea. This equivalence led primitive religions to "confound" the two poles of the association. F. T. Vischer defines this state of confusion as "a warped, inward sense of the unity of image and content" [*Inniges Ineinsfühlen des Bildes und des Inhalts*][125]

Skipping over the second level of symbolism for the moment, the third and last level of symbolism is characterized by a conscious understanding of the

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[124] See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Die Ästhetik*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols., vol. 13, *Werke in 20 Bände* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), pp.389-465.

[125] Vischer, *Kritische Gänge*, p.142.

relation between the idea and the image, and a voluntary application of the symbol for the idea. Our use of the scale as a symbol for justice exemplifies this conscious understanding in which even when one analogically understands the equivalence between the symbol and the idea symbolized, one nevertheless always keeps the two distinct. F. T. Vischer describes the first primitive symbolism in relation to the third in these terms: "This [the primitive symbolism] is different from the psychically necessary symbolism of form intrinsic to human imagination in general. In the latter case we maintain our freedom to perceive the symbolic process as an analogy."[126] Thus in the first stage of symbolism, there is a union of the symbol and the idea, while in the third stage there is a conscious distinction between the two.

The second type of symbolism is to be found at the intermediary level—the symbolism that facilitates our æsthetic experience. This symbolism is of a completely different type. In this symbolism we remain conscious of the inadequation between the idea and the image, but we voluntarily give into the illusion that the two are one. (Ils se confondent) Victor Basch describes this process as follows:

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[126] Robert Vischer, quoting his father in Robert Vischer, "On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics," in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; Distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.90. Hereafter OSF.

> Tout en sachant que la liaison entre l'image et l'idée est inadéquate, nous nous prêtons un instant, pendant la contemplation esthétique, a l'illusion que l'image et l'idée se fonde.[127]

This, F. T. Vischer beautifully describes, as the psychical chiaroscuro of the æsthetic contemplation. Chiaroscuro, because on the one side we keep in sight the clear distinction between the idea and the image, while on the other we simultaneously allow ourselves to loose sight of their inadequation. The symbolism in the æsthetic experience differentiates itself from the two preceding forms of symbolism in that it is neither a complete blending nor a complete separation.

This middle form of symbolism, F. T. Vischer contends, is a symbolism integral to the processes of thought.[128] It cannot be traced back to any specific historical or cultural stages. Rather it is a fundamental symbolic process. This symbolic process seemed to be intrinsic to our relation with the outside world, intrinsic to the perception of our environment.

> Cette forme du symbolisme est fondée, … sur le besoin profond de la nature humaine de se

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[127] "While knowing that the link between the image and the idea is inadequate, during our aesthetic contemplation, we let ourselves be overcome by the illusion that image and idea are one." Basch, *Essai Critique Sur L'esthétique De Kant*, p.293, translation mine.

[128] In his 1866 "Kritik meiner Aesthetik," in Vischer, *Kritische Gänge* he reassess his analysis of the notion of symbolism. Revisiting the notion, he analyzes it now in terms of diverse æsthetic experiences such as the appreciation of artifacts or architecture. He contends that the second type of symbolism as he previously outlined it, is an "internal symbolism."

> retrouver dans toutes les formes d'existence, de s'unir a elle, et ce besoin lui-même, nous ne pourrons pas l'expliquer autrement que par l'unité originelle de l'inconscient et du conscient, des formes extérieures et des formes de notre esprit, de l'étendue et de la pensée, de la matière et de l'âme.[129]

We have an urge, almost an instinct to unite with forms, animate the sensuous world, he writes. We project emotions into objective forms.[130] This form of symbolism is based upon a subjective emotional investment—a mysterious transference of our emotions into the forms we perceive.[131] This urge to project emotions into inanimate objects, he connects with a somewhat pantheistic instinct to merge ourselves with the world outside of us.

> ou mi-involontairement, mi-volontairement, mi-inconsciemment, mi-consciemment, nous animons l'inanimé, nous prêtons a la nature notre personnalité, nous nous plongeons avec tous nos désires, toutes nos aspirations, toute notre âme dans les choses, et y croyons retrouver des parcelles disperses et embryonnaires de cette âme.[132]

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[129] "This form of symbolism is based … on the profound need of human nature to find itself in all forms of existence, to be united with it, and this need we cannot explain otherwise than by the original unity of the unconscious with the conscious, of objective forms with subjective forms, of extension with thought, matter and spirit." Basch, *Essai Critique Sur L'esthétique De Kant*, p.293, translation mine.

[130] *Kritik meiner Asthetik* in Vischer, *Kritische Gänge* 4:316-22.

[131] Vischer, *Aesthetik, Oder Wissenschaft Des Schönen* 3: secs. 240-69.

[132] "semi-involuntarily, semi-voluntarily, semi-unconsciously, semi-consciously we animate the inanimate, we lend nature our personality, we dive in with all our desires, our aspirations, with all of our spirit into things,

Robert Vischer 1847-1933

This analysis of symbolic projection is the foundation for F. T. Vischer's son's work, Robert Vischer. The concept of *Einfühlung,* properly speaking, was first developed in Robert Vischer's 1873 dissertation entitled, "On the Optical sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics."[133] The dissertation was defended at the University of Tübingen under the guidance of Karl Köstlin (1819-1894). As the title of the dissertation indicates, Vischer's inquiry into æsthetics was grounded on an analysis of physiological responses to æsthetic objects. It was developed in reaction to the problems posed by the æsthetics of the time; in particular, Vischer is critical of the formalism of the æsthetics of his contemporaries. Subsequent to the introduction of the notion of *Einfühlung* in his dissertation, Vischer developed the notion in two further articles. The first article of 1874 was entitled *Der ästhetische Akt und die reine Form* and the second article of 1890 was entitled *Über ästhetische Naturbetrachtung.* In 1927, his dissertations and these two treatises were

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and believe to rediscover embryonic and dispersed bits of our sprit in nature." Basch, *Essai Critique Sur L'esthétique De Kant,* p.293, translation mine.

[133] The concept of *sich einfühlen,* as we have seen in the previous chapter, was used in the 18th century by Herder, but it was then devoid of the spatial connotations it acquired in late 19th century æsthetics. In addition to the most proximate influence of his father, T.H.Vischer and of Köstlin, Vischer's thesis was furthermore influenced by Eduard Mörike, David Strauss and more importantly by the physiology of Wilhelm Wundt.

published together in a volume entitled *Drei Schriften zum ästhetischen Formproblem.*[134]

Robert Vischer 's contribution to the philosophical analysis of symbolism was to provide an innovative model for how emotional content is transferred into the æsthetic object. Vischer reconsiders his father's thesis that there is no form without content and asks:

> If, as he [T.H.Vischer] maintains against the Herbartian school, there can be no form without content then it must be shown that those forms devoid of emotional life to which that school refers with some semblance of plausibility are supplied with emotional content that we—the observers—unwittingly transfer to them.[135]

For instance, it is true that the aesthetic appeal of an abstract painting of a vertical line does not immediately appear to be due to its emotional life. Surely, the beauty of such abstract paintings must be due to their form alone. If Vischer is to defend his father's position he must be able to reply to this

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[134] When he chose the topic for his dissertation in the early 1870, Vischer was not aware that Hermann Lotze was also writing in a similar vein. In the 1927 second edition of his dissertation, Vischer mentions that Lotze's writings, especially his *Mikrokosmos,* translated as Hermann Lotze, *Microcosmus: An Essay Concerning Man and His Relation to the World* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), were only available to him after his dissertation was completed. Robert Vischer, *Drei Schriften Zum Ästhetischen Formproblem* (Halle/Saale: M. Niemeyer, 1927), p.4. Vischer also mentions that he was unaware of the use of *sich einfühlen* (as a verb) by Herder.

[135] OSF 89

objection. The answer to the question as to how the forms are supplied with content hinges around Robert Vischer's use of the concept of *Einfühlung*.

Vischer begins by studying the perceptual act and the role physiology and imagination play therein. He wrote:

> The longer I concerned myself with this concept of a pure symbolism of form, the more it seemed to me possible to distinguish between ideal associations and a direct merger of the imagination [*Vorstellung*] with objective form.[136]

During the æsthetic experience the embodiment of the viewer in conjunction with her imagination is engaged.

In emphasizing the role of the imagination and moving beyond formalism, Vischer echoes both Köstlin[137] and Lotze.[138] Köstlin contended that the forms we encounter in the world stimulate our imagination because the perception of objects produces sensations, which are themselves accompanied by

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[136] OSF 92

[137] Köstlin, a former student of F.T. Vischer, director of Robert Vischer's dissertation collaborated with F. T. Vischer on the music sections of his Vischer, *Aesthetik, Oder Wissenschaft Des Schönen*. Köstlin took symbolism of the forms up again in his own treatise similarly entitled Karl Köstlin, *Æsthetic* (Tübingen: H. Laupp'sche Buchhandlung, 1869). The work focused on music as well as art. The musical sections concentrate on the tonal colorations of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. In this treatise, he developed a notion of the "association of ideas"—a notion crucial for its application to the theory of the symbolism of form, as Robert Vischer himself remarked. "The term symbolism of form was first defined and applied to æsthetics in a systematic way by Karl Köstlin; he based it, in particular, on the notion of 'association' of ideas" OSF 91.

[138] Although he only read Lotze much later. See n.134.

emotions. He writes "Our mind is not so narrow so dull, so small, so lethargic, so stupid, or so dead that it sees only form and none of the other things evoked together with forms."[139]

Likewise, similar claims were made by Hermann Lotze, (1817-1881), albeit in the area of science. In his 1866 *Geschichte der Æsthetic in Deutschland*, Lotze brings his analysis to the perception of geometrical forms.[140] There he contends that the reason for which certain geometrical constructions appear to be more pleasing than others is that we read specific qualities into them. Our imagination extracts out of these spatial forms figures of "balance, convergence, or divergence of forces."[141] But the beauty of the forms and the ensuing pleasure are not due to the regularity of the forms themselves—understood in terms of mathematical relations, for that would be the formalist Herbartian position. Rather, for Lotze, the pleasure ensues by the matching up of the spatial viewing to the experience of our own physical condition—our bodily regularity pervades all æsthetic experiences. We import our subjective structure into the experience of objective form. Lotze's contribution was to elucidate the process by which we join emotional

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[139] Köstlin, *Æsthetic* , p.324.

[140] Hermann Lotze, *Geschichte Der Aesthetik in Deutschland* (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1965).

[141] Ibid. p.80

content to all of the sensations produced by impressions, visual or not. Coming from a science background, Lotze insisted upon the physiological origin of this phenomenon. To cite only one instance of his illustrations: he writes that it is because we are subjected to gravity that we understand motion and that it is only because we understand motion that we understand bodily limitations. In instances where these limitations are suspended, the perception of our movements is accompanied by feelings of freedom and joy.[142]

F. T Vischer's analysis of symbolism was developed in terms of a pantheistic urge to merge ourselves with the world outside of us, inherited from the romantic tradition. Robert Vischer contends, however, that to understand the intrinsic symbolism at work in the æsthetic experience solely in terms of our urge to merge with nature is too reductive. Investigating anew the origin of the phenomenon of the symbolism of form in relation to psychological and physiological processes, Robert Vischer theorizes the ability to "feel oneself into" in terms of two further distinctive processes. The first is a process of resonance between subjective and objective form—a resonance based on structural similarities, and the second is a process of direct merger

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[142] Lotze, *Microcosmus: An Essay Concerning Man and His Relation to the World*, pp.584-585.

of the imagination with the objective form.[143] With this claim, Vischer anticipates later phenomenological inquiries into the role played by corporeality in the phenomenon of empathy.[144] The corporality mediated by imagination frames the empathetic process, be it in relation to objects (aesthetic or not) or to fellow human beings. In empathy, we perceive a vital content in an object or a lived body in a subject. To remain, for now, at the level of the aesthetic experience, one can say that the interaction between the formal structure of the object and the corporeality of the subject, supplemented by the mediation of imagination, conditions sensory and emotional responses on the part of the subject.

It does not come as a surprise that Vischer started his research with the role played by physiology in conditioning sensory and emotional responses. Vischer's conceptual framework was influenced by the research from Hermann von Helmholz, in particular by his three-volume "Treatise on Physiological Optics," which was published between 1856 and 1866, as well as by Willehm Wundt's (1832-1920) physiological research in domains such as binocular vision, muscular sensations, reflexes, and the neural activities of

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[143] Vischer's highly original and poetic style does not lend itself easily to an ordered and systematic exegesis, which I attempt here. The following is therefore more an interpretation and interpolation than simply an exegesis.

[144] Merleau-Ponty, following the Husserlian elaboration of empathy in the intersubjective experience, will qualify the role played by corporeality in the phenomenon of empathy as "esthesiological."

the eyes.[145] The tripartite distinction between sensation (*Empfindung*), feeling (*Gefühl*), and emotion (*Gemütsbewegung*) laid out by Wundt provides the background against which Vischer theorizes on the phenomenon of *Einfühlung*.

Vischer henceforth divides the perceptual process into three stages: impressions, sensations and feelings. The last two stages, sensations and feelings, have three different modalities: immediate, responsive, and finally empathetic. The move from the first to the second stage, i.e., from impressions to sensations is described as follows: the object produces an impression on our senses by exiting our nerves (*Erregung*). Sensation is the result of the object "touching" the nerves. Sensations are physiological responses to the outside stimuli produced by the object and accompanied by a representation of it in imagination.[146] For Vischer, feelings are a deepening of

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[145] Hermann von Helmholtz and James P. C. Southall, *Treatise on Physiological Optics*, Dover ed., 3 vols., *Dover Phoenix Editions* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2005). Physiological research accomplished mostly during the year when Wundt worked as Helmoltz' assistant at the university of Heidelberg. After this period Wundt devoted himself to psychological research. His shift from physiology to psychology occurred around the 1863 publication of his Wilhelm Max Wundt, *Vorlesungen Über Die Menschen- Und Tierseele*, 5. aufl. ed. (Hamburg und Leipzig: L. Voss, 1911), translated as Wilhelm Max Wundt, *Lectures on Human and Animal Psychology*, trans. James Edwin Creighton and Edward Bradford Titchener (London: S. Sonnenschein & co., 1896). In 1879, he created his laboratory for experimental research at the University of Leipzig.

[146] Happily, the outdated mechanistic 'explanation' of sensation does not invalidate the rest of Vischer's analysis. I will not be discussing impressions.

sensations resulting from a resonance (*Klang)* between the representation of the object and the representation of self in imagination. Feelings will be congenial or uncongenial depending upon the harmonious or disharmonious nature of this resonance.

Sensation

There are three types of sensations.[147] The first is the immediate sensation—*Zuempfindung*, the second is the responsive sensation—*Nachempfindung*. The third, the empathetic sensation—*Einempfindung* can be immediate or responsive.[148]

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147 My earlier remarks to *fühlen* and its variants applies mutatis mutandis here in relation to *empfinden* and its variants. Vischer addresses other *Empfindung* processes than the three mentioned above, but only peripherally. And while they are lexicographically interesting, they do not parallel the movement towards *Einfühlung*. As such I ignore them.

148 In their translation of Vischer's treatise, Mallgrave and Ikonomou have chosen to translate the German *Einempfindung* by the English expression "empathic sensation." I find this translation unfortunate and ambiguous. Indeed, in order to translate the process of "*Einempfindung*" they make usage of the adjectival form of the substantive—*Einfühlung*, i.e. they import the meaning of the notion of empathy into *Einempfindung*. The translation of *Einempfindung* as empathic sensation has more than one problem. First, it imports the register of "pathos," i.e., feelings in a process that is more primary, that takes place only at the level of sensations. Second by leaving out the "*ein*," the "into," one looses the structural progression between the processes previously described (*zu, nach*). Furthermore, the spatial connotation inherent in the term is lost. Finally, it obfuscates the important differences between *Einempfindung* and *Einfühlung*, differences, which will become transparent at the end of this section. Thus I propose as a possible translation for the process of *Ein-empfindung —enesthesia*. This neologism is

The immediate sensation—*Zuempfindung*—is simply the direct passive response to external stimuli. Vischer illustrates this process with the example of the activity of seeing [*sehen.*] In mere seeing, there is an unconscious activation of the optical nerves that is triggered by the visual stimuli. He writes:

> There is a way of seeing [*sehen*] without any special effort; a way of mere looking that relies on physical activity only insofar as certain groups of nerves are tensed. […] We are concerned now with simply taking in the represented image—the straightforward, broad undifferentiated pursuit of the phenomena as a whole, or objectively speaking, the simple reproduction or photographic impression of the object on our retina.[149]

Seeing is thus a physiological process of stimulus *reception*. It is always a "relatively *unconscious* process, for the impression received is still undifferentiated."[150]

The process of scanning [*Schauen*], which exemplifies the responsive sensation—*Nachempfindung*— is, on the other hand, a *conscious* purposeful

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constructed with the prefix en/em—prefix used for the translation of *Ein/fühlung* as em/pathy, and aesthesia for sensations. It captures the spatial connotations of the term, does not introduce anything else than aesthesia, which means sensations, and finally it indicates that the process, while structurally similar to "feeling oneself into" or empathy, nevertheless remains at the lower echelon of sensation. Enesthesia is the process of "sensing into," not "sensing oneself into." See "Preface" above.

[149] OSF 93

[150] OSF 93

seeing. Scanning represents a higher level of seeing, one that separates and discriminates between the undifferentiated mass of impressions. This is achieved

> [b]y muscular activity, by moving the eye while looking at the object: that is by scanning [*Schauen*]. Scanning is a much more active process than seeing [*sehen*], because it does not simply rely on the natural impulse to seek a relative whole; instead, our eye wanders up and down, left and right making contact with the individual dimension.[151]

In contradistinction to seeing, scanning "sets out to analyze the forms dialectically (by separating and reconnecting the elements) and to bring them into a mechanical relationship."[152] While having a Hegelian structure, this scanning, as an analysis of form, is not restricted to a dialectical process. The process of scanning does not only differentiate itself from seeing through greater conceptual determinacy. Vischer defines it in contradistinction to seeing and emphasizes the fact that scanning derives from an active participation in the world. Scanning, as a responsive sensation [*Nachempfindung*], in fact, exemplifies our active participation in the world—a world, which then becomes invested with value. Through scanning, the image is developed and filled with emotions. Scanning is "accompanied by an

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[151] OSF 94

[152] OSF 94

impelling animation of the dead phenomenon [of mere seeing], a rhythmic enlivening and revitalization of it."[153]

This enlivening and animating process exemplifies the nature of the responsive or kinetic sensation [*Nachempfindung*]. In responsive sensation, the sensuous characteristics of the object arouse in us an interior movement that follows the forms of the object. There are two types of responsive sensations. Responsive sensations can be pleasing or displeasing depending upon their effect upon our nerves and muscles. If the formal characteristics of the object produce in us a congenial movement then the responsive sensation [*Nachempfindung*] will be pleasing, if the characteristics confuse our senses the sensation will be unpleasant. The condition of possibility for the pleasant nature of the sensation is hence dependent upon the similarity between the objective form and the bodily structure of the subject, rather than upon the intrinsic qualities inherent in the form of the external object.[154] With this recognition, Vischer departs from the formalist position of its predecessors.

> The criterion of sensation lies, I believe, in the concept of similarity. This is not so much a harmony within an object, as a harmony between the object and the subject, which arises because the object has a harmonious form and form effect corresponding to subjective harmony.[155]

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[153] OSF 94

[154] OSF 94

[155] OSF 95

Harmony has here has to be understood in terms of similarity. Every sensory perception is, for Vischer, governed by norms of regularity, symmetry, and proportions, not inherent in the object as the Herbartian would have it. Rather, it which depends upon the harmony of the object with the bodily structure of the perceiver. The object's form must be similar to the form or the structure of the subject's body. Only then will the object's form echo with the subjective structure and appear harmonious. Harmonious correlation is based upon:

> The similarity or dissimilarity of the object, first with regard to the structure of the eye and second with regard to the structure of the whole body. The horizontal line is pleasing because our eyes are positioned horizontally, although without an other contrasting form it may verge on monotony. The vertical line, on the contrary, can be disturbing when perceived in isolation, for in a certain sense it contradicts the binocular structure of the perceiving eyes and forces them to function in a more complicated way.[156]

Vischer writes further, "Again, we find that horizontal symmetry always presents a better effect than vertical symmetry because of its analogy with our body."[157] It is interesting here that rather than choosing the vertical line as pleasant because of it being the paradigmatic expression of the verticality of the human body, Vischer, on the contrary, analogizes the horizontal line

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[156] OSF 97

[157] OSF 98

with the body. The reason stated for this somewhat surprising statement is that our vision is not monocular. Not only is our vision binocular, it is based on binocular movement based simultaneously on the optical as well as the bodily. The congruence of the two is what enables spatial perception. Our body may be vertical, but our eyes are aligned horizontally.

After discussing the role played by the body as a measure of similarity, Vischer addresses the role played by the body as a measure of dissimilarity. He writes, that while

> in general, we find all regular forms pleasing because our organs and their functional forms are regular. Irregular forms bother us, to use Wundt's apt phrase, like 'an unfulfilled expectation.' The eye is pained to find no trace of the laws that governs its organization and movement.[158]

Vischer insists, furthermore, on the role played by touch in vision. For him the haptic and the optic are necessarily intertwined. In fact, the haptic seems to have a predominant role to play in the optic, since: "the child learns to see by touching" and the child "reaches for the moon as we reach for a plate."[159] Vischer defines seeing as "a more subtle touching at distance" and touching as "a cruder scanning at close range."[160]

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[158] OSF 97

[159] OSF 94

[160] OSF 94

The senses, Vischer insists, often work together. A specific sensation can resonate across many senses at once. *Zu-* and *Nachempfindung* can be polysensorial. As we will see, polysensorial immediate sensations and responsive sensations facilitate the process of *Einempfindung.* Such polysensorial instances occur because there is a correspondence between the senses. Sensations always involve the whole body. He insists that in *Nachempfindung,* one needs to "consider both the visual impression and the indirect effect of the reflexes."[161]

> We can often observe in ourselves the curious fact that a visual stimulus is experienced not so much with our eyes as with a different sense in another part of our body. When I cross a hot street in the glaring sun and put on a pair of dark blue glasses, I have the momentary impression that my skin is being cooled off.[162]

Visual stimuli connect to kinetic and tactile stimuli and affect the whole body.

> Similarly, we speak of 'loud colors' because their shrillness does indeed induce an offensive sensation in our auditory nerves.

Here we have a visual stimulus that resonates with the auditory nerves.

> Even the muscular movement of the eyes (or head) induces movements in other organs, especially in the tactile organs. They can also produce sensory

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[161] OSF 98

[162] OSF 99

> nerve stimuli in the same way as the later can cause motor stimuli.[163]

Even mental stimuli can provoke kinetic or motor stimuli.

> Likewise, mental stimuli can bring about motor stimuli in the lower organs, and vice versa. The whole body is involved; the entire physical being is moved. For in the body there is, strictly speaking, no such process as localization.

One way to understand the processes of polysensorial *Zuempfindung* and *Nachempfindung* is to approach them in terms of synesthesia. In instances of synesthesia, one sensation gives rise to an associate sensation in a different sensory register. One of the most beautiful examples of synesthesia is to be found in Rimbaud's 1871 poem on vowels, in which he associates vowels with colors: A with black, E with white, I with red, U with green, and O with blue.[164]

The process of *Zuempfindung* occurs when light and colors condition an excitation of the nerves. In Vischer's words it is "a passive process of a sensory or pure nerve function."[165] On the other hand, in *Nachempfindung*, there is an "active process of a motor-nerve function—a muscular

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[163] OSF 99

[164] I always have thought that the Rimbaud's pairing would be different in another language since the sound of the vowel itself is. Due to the extreme difference of vowels' pronunciation in English and French I can only hear the 'O' remaining paired with blue. However, some polyglots still match up certain letters to certain colors, not all grapheme-color synesthesia are instances of sound-color synesthesia.

[165] OSF 97 ff.

movement—a motion." The impression on the nerves conditions a kinesthetic response that is triggered as we follow the objective form, from the outside, as we follow its contours. "The latter follows from the former." Since sensations are difficult to localize within the body and since the excitations of the nerves can themselves trigger further reflex responses in other parts of the body, *Zuempfindung* and *Nachempfindung* often give rise to instances in which various sensations are displaced from one sensory register to another. While this overlapping occurs, they give rise to polysensorial effects. Two things are to be noted here apropos polysensorial instances. The first is that while the senses vibrates in unison, inducing a sliding from one register to the other; there is no unification of the various sensations into a unitary one. We do not experience some new sensory register. Second, the phenomenon remains apprehended from the exterior. One remains an onlooker. The blue glasses make me feel cooler not the object seen cooler. These two points are important to note insofar as they will become crucial for the differentiation between the process of polysensorial *Zu-* or *Nachempfindung* and the process of enesthesia or *Einempfindung*. In enesthesia diverse sensations will become unified into a whole to produce an atmosphere or mood. When we move from *Zu-* and *Nachempfindung* to the process of enesthesia, the sensorial effects intrinsic in both of the former processes, are, in the latter, summed up and transformed into one, interior to the object. There is a unification of diverse sensations.

Nachempfindung involves structural similarities between my body and the object. The unification in enesthesia is produced by the additional *apprehension* of our bodily structure in connection with the apprehension of the structure of the sensible object. Because enesthesia involves the apprehension of my bodily structure, i.e., it involves an image of the body, we need to turn to the imagination to consider how this imaginative representation of the bodily structure might work. More precisely, we need to address the process of symbolism as it pertains to the unconscious transfer of my bodily structure into a mental image.

Vischer's section on imagination starts with the contention that every mental act is accompanied by a symbolic representation of itself in imagination. Imagination is "an act by which we simulate something that previously existed as a vague content of our sensations as sensuous, concrete form."[166] Vischer continues, I can visualize in my mind an absent object, in which case I then *imagine* the object. I can also visualize my own body in my mind, in which case an "imagining of the self" is performed.

Vischer, inspired by Karl Albert Scherner's 1861 study on "The life of the Dream," adapted one of Scherner's discoveries to explain this transfer.[167]

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[166] OSF 99 and f.

[167] Albert Scherner, *Das Leben Des Traums* (Berlin: Heinrich Schindler, 1861).

Scherner's book, which predates Freud's study on the subject by no less than 38 years (1899), described the psychic particularities that occur during the course of dream-formations.[168] Scherner, in his section entitled "Symbolic basic formation for body stimuli," contends that in dreams the body is able to project itself imaginatively in different structures or spatial forms.[169] The body represents itself in objectival forms or structures. The process unfolds as follows:

> Daily experience or reality provides the material for dreams although they are formed by bodily stimuli. The images serve only to mirror subjective moods, which they do as follows: the stimulated parts (nerves, muscles) are *imitated* by analogies to their shape (usually on an enlarged scale) with the help of an object only remotely similar.[170]

This process in which the body projects itself in forms cannot be described as a conscious process since "[h]ere one can only assume a direct continuation of the external sensation into an internal one, a direct mental sublimation of the sensory response,"[171] for example, when a dream "likes to use the representation of a house and its parts, in particular to allude to the body as

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[168] Freud et al., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* , Vol. V.

[169] Scherner, *Das Leben Des Traums*, ch.3 "Die Symbolissche Grundformation für die Leibreize."

[170] OSF 100

[171] OSF 92

a whole or to its parts."[172] Following the wealth of examples provided by Scherner for the different representations of the self of itself in objectival forms, Vischer differentiates between the different bodily stimuli that give rise to a body-representation in terms of an object. Motor stimulus, he explains, can be represented either by "energetic spatial forms" or by "actual images of movements." [173] In the case of visual motor stimuli, Vischer continues, "one might see parrots or fireflies flying, shooting stars falling, white clad cooks jumping around."[174] If I feel uncomfortable in my sleep because of an awkward positioning of my knee, the response to the corrective muscle stimulus might be a vision of myself as being "thrown from a tower" or else seeing "someone else being thrown."[175] In other words, the dream represents a first encounter, "a mysterious combination"[176] between the body structure and the objectival one. But this encounter occurs behind my back, in my blind spot, so to speak. It occurs at an unconscious level.

While Vischer was captivated by this idea—that in dreams bodily stimuli could induce a self-representation of the body as an object. Vischer contended

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[172] OSF 100

[173] OSF 100

[174] OSF 100

[175] OSF 100

[176] OSF 100

innovatively the body/self assume surrogate forms, not only in dreams, but also in waking life. Our waking imagination follows and needs similar mechanisms.

> With careful introspection it is not difficult to see that apart from the more specific abstractions there exists a state of pure absorption in which we imagine this or that phenomenon in accordance with the unconscious need for a surrogate for our body-ego. As in dreams, I stimulate, on the basis of simple nerve sensations, a fixed form that symbolizes my body or an organ of it. Conversely, an objective but accidentally experienced phenomenon always provokes a related idea of the self in sensory or motor form. It does not matter whether the object is imagined or actually perceived; as soon as our idea of the self is projected into it, it always becomes an imagined object: an appearance. The way in which the phenomenon is constructed also becomes an analogy for my own structure. *I wrap myself within its contours as in a garment*.[177]

Imagination enables the two types of sensations, the immediate and the responsive —or kinesthetic— respectively *Zuempfindung* and *Nachempfindung* to be deepened and become two forms of enesthesia. The first becomes an immediate enesthesia and the second a kinesthetic enesthesia.

> The immediate sensation [*Zuempfindung*] may remain completely external; but it may also go deeper and crystallize in a resting, permanent, empathetic sensation [*zuständliche Einempfindung*, in my words immediate

[177] OSF 101, emphasis added.

> enesthesia]. The responsive sensation [*Nachempfindung*] may likewise remain external, or with the aid of the imagination it might insinuate itself into the forms as a kinesthetic empathetic sensation. [*Bewegte Einempfindung*, in my words: kinesthetic enesthesia].[178]

Immediate enesthesia is described as a "prompt stimulation and pulsation." Kinesthetic enesthesia as "a successive enveloping, embracing, and caressing of the object."[179] Both variants of enesthesia can be further described from two opposite sides. On the one hand, it is the perception of a pleasurable form that provokes a sensation, which is congenial because it resonates harmoniously with the symbolic image of the structure of our body. On the other, it is the body that seeks to experience its structure in the objectival form. Vischer concludes, that we have "the wonderful ability to project and incorporate our own physical form into an objective one, in much the same way as wild fowlers gain access to their quarry by concealing themselves in a blind.[180]

While this analogy seems at first to be provided here just as a concluding example of the process at hand, I think that Vischer's specific choice of analogy is important for my previous comparison between enesthesia and camouflage. The verb used in German for the process enabling the fowlers to

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[178] OSF 102

[179] OSF 104

[180] OSF 104

conceal themselves (in order catch their quarry)[181] is *verkriechen,* which is rightly and elegantly translated as "concealing," but the connotations of the word composition is lost to the English reader here in this economical translation. The verb is composed with the prefix *ver* and the verb *kriechen*. Generally *ver* indicates a move away from a specific action, state or place. In conjunction with *kriechen*, it indicates the departure from a place *to* another place. The literal translation of *kriechen* is akin to, "to move *into* a place in which the space is not fitting to the size of the body so that the body disappears because it is covered."[182] Vischer's wording here is not haphazard. In fact, I would like to contend that his specific choice of verb in this example is supposed to make understandable analogically how the process unfolds structurally. *Verkriechen* in the analogy perfectly summarizes the process of enesthesia, as a move from one place to the other—from the subjectival structure into the objectival one, followed by an introjection of the characteristics of the latter by the former.

Enesthesia unfolds in three steps. First, my body can become imaginatively symbolized into a form. This process allows, second, a comparison between the image of my formal structure and the objectival one.

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[181] Which, parenthetically, are wild ducks in the German.

[182] Professor Dr. Dieter Götz, Professor Dr. Günther Haensch, and Professor Dr. Hanz Wellman, *Langenscheidts Großwörterbuch* (Berlin: Langensheidt, 1993), p.581 for *kriechen*, note 3 and 1034 to 1035 for *ver*.

Third, this comparison enables me to sense myself into the structure of the object. Or as Vischer poetically puts it, "I wrap myself within its contours as in a garment."

Enesthesia can, however, be immediate or responsive. We can sense ourselves into objects in motion as much as in inanimate objects. With objects in motion,

> I might imagine myself moving along the line of a range of hills guided by kinesthetic imagination (be it direct or mediated by the reflex stimuli of sensitized nerves). In the same way, fleeting clouds might carry me far away. This is no longer seeing but a watching [*Schauen*]: the forms appear to move, but only we move in the imagination. *We move in and with the forms.*[183]

In enesthesia, the relation to the object is not anymore a purely external relation of comparison. Through enesthesia, we sense ourselves *into* the object. In this instance we apprehend the objective form from the inside, so to speak, rather than solely from the outside as with *Zu-* and *Nachempfindung*. In enesthesia, there is a "penetrating into the phenomena"[184] ensuing from an acquiring of the phenomenon's characteristics, or its movements but this process requires only an unreflective apprehension of self, and based on the form of the object. To understand the process of enesthesia better, we can compare it with mimicry in the animal kingdom.

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[183] OSF 101, emphasis added.

[184] OSF 101

Mimicry or imitation is a process in which one animal structurally integrates the characteristics of its environment or the shape, form, or color of other animals. This behavior is described by Roger Caillois in his 1935 paper "Mimicry and legendary Psychasthenia."[185] In it, Caillois contends that the function of mimicry is not what it seems, namely, solely camouflage taken up in order for one animal to escape its predators by visually adapting itself to its environment or an attempt to escape predators by mimicking their appearance.[186] Camouflage, Caillois contends, is not necessarily an adaptive behavior but rather the sign of an inability to maintain the boundaries between inside and outside, between figure and ground.[187]

Analogously, enesthesia seems to be a process in which there occurs between the self and the object a fluctuation of boundaries that enables the intermingling of inside/outside, where the exterior structural characteristics and/or the movement of the latter are inwardly sensed by the former. In

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[185] Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," in *The Edge of Surrealism : A Roger Caillois Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[186] The ability to camouflage oneself may well be evolutionary advantageous and therefore evolutionarily selected, but that selection is an effect of the ability to camouflage oneself and not the cause of the trait in the first place.

[187] Lacan relates mimicry to heteromorphic identification. "But the facts of mimicry are no less instructive when conceived as cases of heteromorphic identification in as much as they raise the problem of the signification of space for the living organism." Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977), p.3.

enesthesia there is thus a juxtaposition of processes, one a process of intermingling of the characteristics of both the body and the object concomitant to an unconscious projection of the body structure and a sensing into the objectival form. As Vischer writes:

> In rooms with low ceilings our whole body feels the sensation of weight and pressure. […] The perception of exterior limits to a form can combine in some obscure way with the sensation of my own physical boundaries, which I feel on, or rather with, my own skin.[188]

In waking life, as in dreams, imagination enables my body to symbolize itself into a form and facilitates the move from the exteriority of the phenomena to its interiority.

> If we now look back at our original notion of sensation, we find it vitally enlarged and deepened by the imagination. […] It is deepened insofar as it is now capable of departing from a relation of mere form (isolation) and penetrating into the phenomena.[189]

In enesthesia, "Nous nous mettons … dans un objet et en imitons la forme plastique."[190] Richard Woodhouse gives us a beautiful example of enesthesia (both immediate and kinesthetic). He recounts that a friend of Keats reports him having said: "that he can conceive of a billiard ball, that it may have a

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[188] OSF 98

[189] OSF 101

[190] "We put ourselves … into an object while imitating its shape," Basch, *Essai Critique Sur L'esthétique De Kant*, p.295, translation mine.

sense of delight from its own roundness, smoothness […] volubility and the rapidity of its motion."[191]

Feelings

Vischer thinks of impression in mechanistic terms and sensation in physical terms. The form of an object is in harmony or disharmony with my body and how I move it. Imagination allows me to project this harmony or disharmony into the object. At least until enesthesia, such a process is almost entirely physical and I need no sense of self. In sensation, this harmony is analyzed by an analogy with touch [*Erregung*]. In feeling, we have a new harmony, but it is analyzed using an analogy of sound. Resonance [*Klang*] is involved. What is harmonious or not is the way in which a form at the level of sensation was harmonious. In feeling, what is in harmony is not just a matter of physical space and my bodily structure. In feeling, sensuous harmony has been projected into the object and I am now *resonating* in harmony with that, or not. So in feeling, the harmony at play is my lived reaction to the sensation of physical harmony.

The difference between sensation and feeling is that in feeling the subject does not only project its bodily form, but also its soul into the form of the

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[191] Richard Woodhouse, *Notes on a Letter from Keats,* John Keats and Hyder Edward Rollins, *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), I:389.

object. Even in conjunction with imagination, i.e., in cases of enesthesia, we remain at the level of objectival structure. Sensing oneself into results from similarities between bodily structure and objectival structure. The body becomes wrapped in the objective form as in a garment. However, similarities between viewer and object are limited to formal ones and this fact seems to preclude the possibility of a projection of emotional content.[192] Vischer, nonetheless is very clear about the projection of emotional content, he writes:

> Thus it [the subject/viewer] unconsciously projects its own bodily form [as in sensation]—and with this also the soul—into the form of the object.[193]

In feelings, we start with objective form or structure, but rather than remaining at the periphery of the phenomena "we cast a warmer look toward their spiritual core."[194] The projection of vitality into the aesthetic object is facilitated by the structural affinities between it and the viewer's body that resulted in the sensing in of enesthesia. Thanks to imagination's mediation of sensation, we are, in the process of feeling, able to enliven the aesthetic object. Vischer explains the process as follows:

> My kinship with the elements is too remote to require any kind of compassion on my part… What

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[192] The process by which we feel ourselves into the object is empathy and not sympathy because sympathy, as feeling for or feeling with, is only possible where the target has feelings already—or is at the very least alive.

[193] OSF 92

[194] OSF 103

> are those forms to me through which the red blood life does not flow? I do not measure my heart with the same yardstick as I do a lump of stone. Where there is no life—precisely there do I miss it. At this point however, our feelings rise up and take the intellect at its word: yes we miss red-blooded life, and precisely because we miss it, we imagine the dead form as living.[195]

But how can inanimate objects arouse feelings in us? Z*uempfindung* or immediate sensation is the process in which light and colors produce an excitation of the nerves. The process is a passive process and represents a pure nerve function. In *Zufühlung*, I still attend to the outward appearance of the object but the immediate passive process of the nerve function that simulates my sense is intellectualized. Vischer writes

> We find that the immediate feeling functions most directly. Pure superficiality affects me simply as such; or conversely I attended solely to the outward appearance of the object. This is a direct intellectualization of sensory stimuli.[196]

Vischer's example for the process of immediate feeling [*Zufühlung*] is the effect of light on mood. The direct effect of light, he writes, produces in us a secondary effect and gives rise to an "act as a stimulus, impossible to trace further, on the formation of thoughts, and thereby it affects the mood of the whole person."[197] For instance, blue fills us with "mild yearning,"[198] while red

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[195] OSF 104

[196] OSF 108

[197] OSF 107

affects us as "glowing vitality." Light, all of a sudden, acquires "the characteristic look of life." Once more we notice here an instance of our own stimulation, this time an affective one, in which the object symbolizes our feeling. We confuse "our own stimulation with the thing that produces the stimulus: light and color in themselves appear to be angry, to jubilate, to mourn and so on."[199]

In *Nachempfindung* or responsive sensation, the impression on the nerves triggers a kinesthetic response. This movement or muscular response is an active process that follows the contour of the objective form from the outside. The responsive sensation intensifies into a responsive feeling [*Nachfühlung*] when the responsive motion triggered by the impressions gives rise to "human impulses and passions."[200] Vischer illustrates the process with the example of our following the curve of a road. When I follow the curves and the undulations of the road, not only do I follow its form structurally, as in responsive sensation, but the motions of the responsive sensations are intensified and "lured into compassion."[201] Thus the apparent movement of the form, which we follow, is accompanied by a secondary effect—"a concrete

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[198] OSF 108 ff.

[199] OSF 108

[200] OSF 107

[201] OSF 107

element of feeling," which the object comes to symbolize. "The road traced by the responsive feeling [*Nachfühlung*] seems to hesitate and rush impatiently along its course. The bright air in which we float and dream seems itself to be dreaming."[202]

Zufühlung and *Nachfühlung,* however, still remain, so to speak, on the surface of things; the form of the object symbolizes the subject's feelings. When we move to *Einfühlung* we move toward the inside of the object. Just as enesthesia stemmed from *Zuempfindung* and *Nachempfindung*, empathy stems from *Zufühlung* and *Nachfühlung*—which are together called *Anfühlung* (at-feeling) by Vischer. Enesthesia integrates the two levels of sensation i.e. *Zuempfindung* and *Nachempfindung*. Similarly, empathy integrates both levels of feeling, viz. *Zufühlung* and *Nachfühlung*.

In enesthesia, one is tracing the object from the outside, i.e. in relation to its form toward the center so as to fit oneself or one's bodily structure *into* it as in a garment. Enesthesia, as a "sensing into," is formal. Empathy, as feeling—as the process of "feeling oneself into"—moves further into the object. Feelings penetrate the objectival kern.

> We can therefore say that empathy traces the object from the inside (the object's center) to the outside (the object's form).[203]

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[202] OSF 107

[203] OSF 108

In enesthesia, imagination makes possible the representation of the viewer's body, hence a comparison between the form of the viewer's body and the form of the aesthetic object, and finally a sensing into the aesthetic object. Vischer explains that in imagination, there is a "stimulation" and a "successive enveloping of the object" by which we project ourselves into the interior of the phenomena.

The faculty of imagination has a similar role to play in empathy, but in empathy the object is invested with emotional content. Immediate feeling and responsive feeling together, i.e., *Anfühlung,* via the activity of imagination, trigger empathy. In empathy, we project ourselves *and our life* into the interior of the phenomenon. We project our life so fully into the object that the object seems endowed with the feelings we in fact have projected into it.

> I entrust my individual life to the lifeless form, just as I […] do with another living person. Only ostensibly do I remain the same although the object remains an other. I seem merely to adapt and attach myself to it as one hand clasps another, and yet I am mysteriously transplanted and magically transformed into this other.[204]

Empathy, writes Vischer, is a projection from the subject, an exchange with the object (by virtue of which the object takes on a life of its own) and finally a return to the subject.

> Only now—by virtue of this central *projection*, *exchange*, and *return*—does it [the object] take a life

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[204] OSF 104

> of its own. It [the subject] looks at its second self as it sits reshaped in the object and intuitively takes it back to itself, yet without discerning it clearly or knowing why.[205]

The projective aspect of empathy is what distinguishes it from enesthesia. Enesthesia is a type of introjection.[206] Introjection is an unconscious act in which the characteristics of an object are incorporated into the self.[207] Introjection is an instance in which "in phantasy the subject transposes objects and their inherent qualities from the 'outside' to the 'inside' of himself."[208] Introjection is a type of internalization distinct from

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[205] OSF 108, emphasis added.

[206] Introjections and incorporation are both forms of internalization. Incorporation is defined as "The most primitive least differentiated form of internalization in which the object looses its distinction as object and becomes totally taken into the inner subjective world." W. W. Meissner, *Internalization in Psychoanalysis*, *Psychological Issues Monograph 50* (New York: International Universities Press, 1981), p.25 cited in Kenneth C. Wallis and James L. Poulton, *Internalization: The Origins and Construction of Internal Reality*, *Core Concepts in Therapy* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), p.10.

[207] Although it is Ferenczi that is credited for the application of introjection in psychoanalysis, it is Richard Avenarius who coined the term in 1891 to "refer to how sense perceptions become mental counterparts of perceived objects." Wallis and Poulton, *Internalization: The Origins and Construction of Internal Reality* , p.11.

[208] Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, *The International Psycho-Analytical Library, No. 94* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), p.229.

identification.[209] So, for instance, we feel the roundness of the billiard ball from the inside but the phenomena is experienced as in us.

The first step of empathy is projective. Projection is defined as:

> The operation whereby a neurological or psychological element is displaced and relocated in an external position, thus passing either from center to periphery or from subject to object.[210]

In empathy,[211] we *project* feelings into the aesthetic object and do not simply take on a certain harmony with its form, as in enesthesia. In a second moment, the object takes on, in *exchange*, the feelings we project and then it *returns* it to me as if the tree herself opens her branches longingly. The root of this intensification lies in the difference between harmony and resonance. In sensation, we have a harmony between my bodily form and the form of the aesthetic object. In enesthesia, via imagination, this harmony is introjected. In feeling, the object of harmony is not merely formal, but rather the harmony that was between my bodily form and the form of the aesthetic

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[209] *Wallis and Poulton, Internalization: The Origins and Construction of Internal Reality* , p.10 quoting Roy Schafer, *Aspects of Internalization* (New York: International Universities Press, 1968), p.16.

[210] Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, p.349.

[211] The translation of *Einfühlung* with the French neologism *intropathie* (Originally in Husserl, *Idées Directrices Pour Une Phénoménologie*) facilitates the understanding of the return moment in the process of *Einfühlung*. Following Freud, introjection is usually only used in connection with the register of representation. *Einfühlung* translated as *intro-pathie* brings out the intro-jective character of the process, but here in the register of pathos or affect.

object, but now has been introjected. That *harmony* is resonating *anew* with the aesthetic object. So what I now find in the aesthetic object has not merely a formal component but involves my lived body in a formal harmony and thus is enlivened. Thus resonance produces emotive aspects in the aesthetic object. To make the parallel with enesthesia more explicit, we can start with the return first. In enesthesia, what is introjected (parallel to the moment of return) is a formal structure of the object harmonious with my body. In feeling, what is returned is a lived body feeling that we project back into the aesthetic object and "imagine the dead form as living." "I am mysteriously transplanted and magically transformed into this other," but "without discerning it clearly or knowing why."

There are two necessary conditions for the move from sensation to feeling. As the resonance involves a second order harmony between the aesthetic object and my first order formal harmony between the form of the aesthetic object and my bodily form represented in my imagination, I need this sense of self, constructed in imagination. So long as there is no sense of self, we remain at the level of sensation. For instance, in Melzoff's example, when a neonate starts crying, others often follow. This mimicry is not a sign of empathy or concern for others, rather it is simple contagion due to lack of ego boundaries. This phenomenon remains at the level of enesthesia. To project into, exchange with, and return to the self, we need a self to leave and return to. Vischer does not draw any conclusions about empathy's relations to the

constitution of self, but it seems reasonable to conclude that the self is not just required for empathy, but is in part constituted by it, as Stein will argue.

The second necessary condition is that we need to universalize our condition through cultural formation.

> In sensing and imagining the object, the activity of perception does not, however, imply a truly emotional contact with that object. Sensation has yet to advance through its partial or total implication with ideas to the stage of a psychic feeling. Before this can happen, a spiritual value or vital force has to be perceived within the phenomenon; the human being must pass through the realm of experience and education [*Bildung*].[212]

Before we can perceive a "vital force" or a "spiritual value" in a phenomenon, we need ourselves to have achieved a move beyond our limited perspective to encompass a more general social perspective. Vischer contends that there is not much difference between a feeling of the self alone, i.e., a self that is not in relation to the whole of society, and a sensation. Vischer illustrates the move from self-interest to the interest of humanity in general with the example of a farmer who is downcast by hail damaging his crop. To be sure, the farmer experiences a feeling of discontent and sadness, but this feeling, insists Vischer, is *just one degree above sensation*, since this feeling is based solely on a self-feeling [*Selbstgefühl*], which makes things resonate only with his own personal interest. To reach the level of feeling, the discontent and the

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[212] OSF 102-3

sadness experienced by the farmer at the sight of the destruction of his crop needs to be extended to his fellow farmers.[213] To become truly feeling, the feeling needs to leave the self to encounter the other. Vischer describes the process of empathy involved in aesthetic contemplation in terms of this human ability to ascend from egoistical feelings toward feelings in terms of the whole—in terms of *Menscheitdasein*. One could more aptly rephrase it as *Menscheitmitdasein*, since, for Vischer, *Menscheitdasein* presupposes being with others. Empathy is based on an "intellectual renunciation and volatization of the feeling of self, which now only exists in relation (to the whole)."[214]

Vischer concentrates on aesthetic experience, rather than empathy with other humans, but it is in his holism that we find a reason that empathetic feelings with humans have the opportunity to be more profound. The world, for Vischer, is an organic whole, and we are part of it. But being the social animals we are, we are even more interwoven into and part of the whole of humanity. The second reason for the profundity of empathy with fellow humans is that "only towards other human beings does it [empathy] act as a doubling of self."[215] Again the role of imagination is paramount

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[213] OSF 103

[214] OSF 110

[215] OSF 106

> A pure and complete union between the subjective and objective imagination (intuition) can take place only when the latter involves another human being.[216]

When we empathize with a fellow human being, not only do we have the resonance of formal harmony, but we also have the possibility for reciprocal resonance. However, Vischer seems clear that this is not a difference of kind.

> With organic nature, empathy functions symbolically to animate a plant and to anthropomorphize an animal; … yet even in the later case [empathy between humans] a kind of symbolic projection is possible through the abstraction of details (fantastic hair, prominent nose).[217]

The difference between *Anfühlung* and empathy is how much independence the aesthetic object is felt as having. In the case of the road hesitating, I identify a certain hesitation that I experience with the road. In empathy, I release the tree allowing her to outstretch her arms. The emotional life of the tree may well actually be a reliving of my emotions, but it is not simply an identification of my emotional life with the tree. In fact, precisely because I *re*live emotions, I experience them as reliving the tree's emotions. In a broader sense, both these experiences have been referred to as empathetic. Those who stress the former *Anfühlung* tend towards *Einsfühlung* (note "s") of Lipps where one feels at one with the object, a type

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[216] OSF 103

[217] OSF 106

of complete identification. The latter follows more closely to Stein's analysis, who argues, not without reason, that it is not clear how one would ever be able to get back into ones body if this ever happened. And indeed, the return of which Vischer speaks when he differentiates *Anfühlung* from *Einfühlung* is, as he himself says, rather mysterious. The philosophical import here is that the experience of reliving the tree's emotions, rather than identifying with them, is what is going to form the basis for the experience of intersubjectivity in Stein. The goal of Vischer's analysis was to bring back the subjective content back into the aesthetic experience. As such, he did not emphasize the constitutive role played by empathy in both the formation of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. However, he gives us, Lipps, and Stein, the resources to do so.

Chapter 3

Empathy Via Negativa

Empathy is Neither

an Analogy nor a Feeling of Oneness

Introduction

Stein's treatise, written under the direction of Edmund Husserl and entitled "The Empathy Problem as It Developed Historically and Considered Phenomenologically," was defended at the Albert Ludwigs-University of Freiburg on August 3, 1916, and published the following year.

The first section, on the historical development of the concept, was, however, omitted in the published version of the dissertation, although Stein refers to it in her foreword. This first section is now sadly lost. In the foreword, Stein describes the antecedant treatments of the problem of empathy as unsatisfactory. The problem of our perception of others, she contends, was approached from a variety of different perspectives, but in a very confused manner. For Stein, the most important shortcoming of these investigations is that they were not methodological. The reason why she thought it worthwhile to revisit the concept of empathy anew is that these earlier inquiries were not underpinned by a phenomenological method. They focused on empirical aspects of the phenomenon of empathy, as well as on explorations of its causes, but not, Stein regrets, on an analysis of its

essence, on an eidetic proper. Furthermore, as she writes, "The epistemological, purely descriptive, and genetic-psychological aspects of this identified problem were undistinguished from another."[218]

Stein, therefore, decided to revisit the phenomenon of empathy. She hoped to remedy the shortcomings, omissions, and confusions of her predecessors. Stein's objective was to 1) reconsider the vast amount of literature about *Einfühlung* in the turn-of–the-century academic debates and, 2) phenomenologically clarify what the essence of empathy is, in order to outline how the phenomenon of empathy factors in 3) the perceiving of foreign subjects and their experiences.

To address her first objective, Stein first proceeds to describe the phenomenon of empathy by via negativa—by outlining what empathy is not. Empathy is not inference by analogy; it is also not complete identification. I will follow this route too. This chapter is, thus, divided into two parts. The first section is an assessment of Stein's criticism of Mill's claim that empathy is a disguised inference by analogy. The second centers on Stein's response to Lipps' assertion that in empathy a complete identification between the subject and the other occurs. In the following chapter, I will concentrate on

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[218] Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Stein, 3rd rev. ed., *The Collected Works of Stein* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1989), p.1, hereafter OPE.

Stein's phenomenological inquiry into the essence of the act of empathy proper.

Contra Mill: Empathy is not an Analogical Inference

John Stuart Mill 1806-1873

> Certainly 'common sense' does not take 'inference from oneself to others' as a usable means of reaching knowledge of foreign psychic life.[219]

Introduction

John Stuart Mill gives one of the most succinct expressions of the so-called problem of other minds:

> By what evidence do I know, or by what consideration am I led to believe, that there exists other sentient creatures; that the walking and speaking figures which I see and I hear, have sensations and thoughts, or in other words, possess minds?[220]

He also gives one of the possible answers, namely, "by analogy," in its canonical form.

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[219] OPE 87

[220] John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, and of the Principal Philosophical Questions Discussed in His Writings*, 6th ed. (London and New York,: Longmans, Green, and co., 1889), pp.243-244.

> I conclude that other human beings have feelings like me, because, first, they have bodies like me, which I know in my own case, to be the antecedent condition of feelings; and because, secondly, they exhibit the acts, and other outward signs, which in my own case I know by experience to be caused by feelings. I am conscious in myself of a series of facts connected by a uniform sequence, of which the beginning is modifications of my body, the middle is feelings, the end is outward demeanor. In the case of other human beings I have the evidence of my senses for the first and last links of the series, but not for the intermediate link. I find, however, that the sequence between the first and the last is as regular and constant in those other cases as it is in mine. In my own case I know that the first link produces the last through the intermediate link, and could not produce it without. Experience, therefore, obliges to conclude that there must be an intermediate link; which must either be the same in others as in myself, or a different one: I must either believe them to be alive, or to be automatons: and by believing them to be alive, that is, by supposing the link to be of the same nature as in the case of which I have experience, and which is in all other respects similar, I bring other human beings, as phenomena, under the same generalization which I know by experience to be the true theory of my own existence.[221]

To take an example, I see someone eat an oyster and then go rather pale. These two perceptions are the "first and last link" in a putative series, with, say, nausea as the middle term. According to Mill, to arrive at the conclusion that someone's pallor is caused by a feeling of nausea, these two immediate perceptions need to be supplemented by memory and inference. According to

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[221] Ibid. , pp.243-244

Mill, we need some kind of argument to justify that there is a causally effective inner state, an "intermediate link" between these two perceptions. In this example, I have to remember, when I suddenly go pale, I feel unwell. Outwards pallor is the regular bodily expression of my inner perception of nausea. Given that the person whom I am observing has the same bodily constitution, I am warranted in imputing nausea to her inner state—given that we have the same bodily constitution! That we have similar embodiments is in effect that for which Mill is trying to provide an argument. It certainly cannot be a premise en route to the conclusion that you are sentient too. However, if I believe that eating oysters can cause immediate nausea, repeated examples of similar putative *tripartite* series—oyster, X, pallor—might warrant the seemingly question-begging premise, namely that we are similarly embodied and thus sentient.[222]

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[222] Stein's rendition of Mill's theory runs as follows: "The standpoint of this theory is as follows. There is evidence of outer and inner perception and we can only get at the facts that these perceptions furnish by means of inferences. This applies to the present case as follows: I know the foreign physical body and its modifications; I know my own physical body and its modifications. Further, I know that the modifications of the latter are conditions and implications of my experiences, likewise given. Now, because in this case the succession of physical appearances can only take place when linked with experience, I assume such a linkage where physical appearances are given alone." OPE 26

Edith Stein's Objections

There are a host of problems with inferential theories of "empathy." There are accusations of circularity. Does not the inference require, as a premise, that you and I are similarly embodied, which is surely that for which the inference is supposed to be providing warrant? Perhaps repeated observations of the same form might circumvent this objection, but that leads us to another more trenchant objection. It has been pointed out that we would seem to need repeated observations before we figure out that people are sentient, whereas it seems that we know straight away from a very early age, at the first encounter, that people are sentient. Our experience of the sentience of other people does not seem to involve memory and inference. This fundamental difficulty arises from a confusion in Mill's mind between grounds for a certain type of warranted claims of knowledge and the "considerations by which I am led to believe." If someone asks me how to produce an argument justifying the claim that people are sentient, it might well be appropriate to give an argument based on analogy. But to suggest that any experience of other people's sentience must rely on such an argument is surely too reductive.[223] This second difficulty for the theory of an

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[223] Or as Heidegger puts it, "Knowledge is a founded mode of being," which implies that there is more to knowledge than disembodied justifiable claims asserting propositions about things present-at-hand. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Oxford:

experience of other minds through inference by analogy is akin the one of the two trenchant criticisms that Stein has for the proposal.

Stein has two criticisms, one phenomenological, one methodological. Her phenomenological criticism, in a nutshell, is that our experience of others just is not the same type of experience as the experience of an inference. Neither the inference itself, nor what is inferred have the same form of givenness as the empathetic feeling we do in fact have. Her methodological criticism is that we first have to uncover what foreign experience is using the phenomenological method, so we know that we have a bone fide phenomenon, before any investigation into causes of it. Causal "genetic-psychological" investigations presuppose a phenomenological investigation and cannot replace it.

If we understood other minds by analogy, if foreign experience were inferentially based then it would be possible to imagine, at least for the nonce that people are automata. After all, any question that requires evidence and argument for it to be resolved *in practice* presupposes that we can *meaningfully suppose* multiple answers to the question at issue; in this case we need to suppose that the possibility that people might be automata is meaningful in practice and not just in theory. But to actually treat people as

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Blackwell, 1967); Martin Heidegger, *Sein Und Zeit*, 8. univeränderte Aufl. ed. (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1967), §13.

automata is, if not impossible, surely very, very difficult. As Wittgenstein puts it:

> But can't I imagine that the people around me are automata, lack consciousness, even though they behave in the same way as usual? […] Say to yourself for example: 'The children over there are mere automata; all their liveliness is mere automatism.' And you will either find theses words becoming quite meaningless; or you will produce in yourself some kind of uncanny feeling.[224]

Stein gives the reason for this.

> The foreign individual's physical body as such is given as a part of physical nature in causal relationship with other physical objects. He who pushes it imparts motion to it; its shape can be changed by blows and pressure; different illumination changes its color, etc. But these causal relationships are not all. As we know, the foreign physical body is not seen as a physical body, but as a living one. We see it suffer and carry out effects other than the physical.[225]

In other words, we have an indubitable perception, "we see it," of the sufferings of other people. "Indubitable" does not mean veridical here, but rather, that the experience has a brute facticity to it. This foreign individual's body is given to us as a living body because we see it having experiences, we see it carry out effects other than physical, we see it suffer. In other words, this body, which appears in my phenomenal world as any other body, I see

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[224] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), §420.

[225] OPE 71

also as a lived body—as an I, an individual, that is the center of orientation of its own world. "It is an I that senses, thinks, feels and wills […] It faces this world and communicates with it."[226] It is thanks to an act of empathy that the liveliness of the individual is given to me, that the individual is given as an experiencing individual. In other words, it is given to me as a "psycho-physical individual."[227] I comprehend that her body is a living sensitive body, we comprehend that the individual is sentient. "The phenomenon of foreign psychic life is indubitably there.[228]" "The world in which we live," Stein continues "is not only a world of physical bodies but also of experiencing subjects external to us, of whose experiences we know."

There is another problem with the doctrine of foreign experience by inference analogous to the problem raised by the fact that we cannot treat people as automata, namely, the difficulty that if we could and needed to infer that others have minds, the kind of inference we would arrive at would not give us the actual experience of others *we do in fact have*. Stein begins by acknowledging that inferential thinking concerning other's inner states is indeed possible. But her pointed criticism is that such theories cannot lead to a *perception* of others per se; it can only putatively yield a probable

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[226] OPE 5

[227] OPE 5

[228] OPE 5

knowledge of the causal connection between the outwardly countenance and the inner workings of the individual and her motivations, and is, in fact, only required when we fail to empathizes or "deny" empathy.

> [W]e cannot deny that inferences by analogy do occur in knowledge of foreign experience.[229] It is easily possible for another's expression to remind me of one of my own so that I ascribe to his expression its usual meaning for me. Only then can we assume the comprehension of another 'I' with a bodily expression as a psychic expression. *The inference by analogy replaces the empathy perhaps denied.* It does not yield perception, but a more or less probable knowledge of the foreign experience.[230]

Stein's methodological objections are the following: the goal of analogical theory is, on the one hand, to give an epistemological justification of the claims made about other people's inner states, and on the other, to provide an answer to the question concerning what causes us to impute inner states to others. Both of these goals assume that we already have access to foreign experience. Plainly stated, when I empathize with your pain, I do not figure out that you show signs of pain in some disinterested way; I feel your pain. The phenomenologist is intent on explaining the way in which this experience *undoubtedly actually happens*—explain its mode of *givenness*—not only justify whether the claims I make about others feelings can be or are

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[229] Important here is that she writes "in knowledge" not "in perception."

[230] OPE 27, emphasis added.

warranted. Clearly, no "genetic-psychological" investigation can get at what the experience of empathy *is*, nor at the way in which it constitutes my and the other's subjectivity, since it presupposes already well-formed subjects facing one another. As Stein has it:

> What is foreign experience in its givenness? How does the perception of foreign experience look? We must know this before we can ask how this perception occurs. It is self-evident that this first question cannot be in principle be answered by a genetic-psychological investigation of cause, for such an investigation actually presupposes the being whose development it is seeking to ground—its essence as well as the existence, its 'what' as well its 'that.' Not only the investigation of the nature of the perception of foreign experiencing but also the justification of this perception must thus precede genetic psychology. And if this psychology alleges to accomplish both of these things itself its claim must be rejected as thoroughly unjustified.[231]

Even if they sometimes do occur, as Stein concedes, analogical inferences have no part to play in the phenomenological inquiry into the givenness of the foreign experience, for they are not eidetic. They cannot eliminate everything that lies outside of immediate perception and as such stand in sharp contrast to the immediate givenness of the foreign experience yielded by empathy. For to be completed analogies require an inference, which is not perceptually given.

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[231] OPE 96

On the contrary, acts of empathy, Stein argues, yields an *experience* of the content of the foreign experience; an immediate perception of it within my sphere of owness. In acts of empathy, the pain is given to me "at one" with the countenance, I do not therefore analogically infer it "in" the countenance, in the pallor of the face. But the pain is also not given to me simply as a thing among other things, that is primordially. What is given to me outwardly is the countenance. The countenance is given to me in outer perception. But the feeling of the other, in this case the pain, is given to me inwardly and thus indubitably. Stein writes: "The pain is not a thing; it is not given to me as a thing, even when I am aware of it "in" the pained countenance. I perceive this countenance outwardly and the pain is given "at one" with it."[232] Thus while the pain does not have the primordial character of an experience had by me, it nevertheless "registers" with me in its immediate givenness, it resonate within me.

Thus in conclusion, empathy is not inference by analogy. More often than not, actual cases of inference by analogy are only needed when empathy has broken down, but even then they cannot replace empathy. Indeed in the act of empathy, I perceive the experience of the foreign individual, whereas in inference by analogy, I deduce it. In so doing, I only succeed in earning a probable knowledge of the causal linkage between the outward perception of

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[232] OPE 6

the foreign individual's countenance with a possible state of feeling or motivation. Such an artificial after the fact linkage cannot yield a perception. It thus does not achieve the *phenomenal* indubitability that empathy does in fact achieve. Furthermore, since it relies on an inference that lies outside of perception it cannot be said to be an account of the *givenness* of foreign individuals. Moreover, but for the same reason, it cannot lie within an eidetics of empathy and is thus a methodologically inappropriate explanation for the givenness of foreign experiences.

Contra Lipps: Einfühlung is not Einsfühlung

Theodor Lipps 1851-1914

> Empathy is the fact here established, that the object is myself and by the very same token this self of mine is the object. Empathy is the fact that the antithesis between myself and the object disappears.[233]

Introduction

Theodor Lipps (1851-1914) was the founder of what came to be remembered as the Munich Circle, the *Akademischer Verein für Psychologie*,

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[233] Theodor Lipps, "Empathy, Inner Imitation, and Sense-Feelings," in *A Modern Book of Esthetics; an Anthology*, ed. Melvin Miller Rader (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1960), p.376. Hereafter EIS.

started in1895. The group included Theodor Lipps, Alexander Pfänder, Max Scheler and Adolf Reinach.[234] All of them had ties and worked in close collaboration with the Gottingen Circle, formed around Husserl, and co-edited the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung*.

Theodor Lipps' development of the theory of empathy is vast.[235] Following in the steps of his predecessors, Lipps started from aesthetic experience. Lipps' inquiries into the phenomenon of empathy, however, evolved into a psychological theory by way of the application of the process empathy to intersubjective experience.

Lipps develops the concept of *Einfühlung* in his 1903 monograph, entitled "Empathy, Inner Imitation and Sense-Feelings." Lipps describes the process of aesthetic contemplation as follows:

> I have a feeling of joy before a beautiful object […]
> But only the sensuous appearance of the aesthetic

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[234] Adolf Reinach (1883-1917) studied under Lipps and received his doctorate in 1904 under him in Munich. He then went to study with Husserl in Gottingen and habilitated under his direction in 1909. He then became a Privatdozent and initiated new students in to phenomenology. In 1913 Stein took his seminar on motion and his course entitled "Introduction to Philosophy." Alexander Koyré was another debutant under the supervision of Reinach.

[235] It is beyond the scope of this project to outline it in full. I will focus solely on the sections of Lipps descriptions of the act of *Einfühlung* that are relevant directly to Stein's response to him to which she devotes 7 pages. Which is to say that at this point of my inquiry, I specifically focus on what provokes her critique, namely, his treatment of *Einfühlung* as *Einsfühlung*—"empathy as a feeling of oneness."

> object, for example of the work of art, is attended to in aesthetic contemplation. It alone is the 'object' of the aesthetic enjoyment; it is the only things that stands 'opposite' me as something distinct from myself and with which I, and my feeling of pleasure enter in some relationship. It is through this relationship that I am joyous or pleased, in short, enjoying myself.[236]

Here, Lipps is more or less following Vischer's description of the feeling of joy and of pleasure occurring during the aesthetic experience as resulting from a relationship between the viewer and the object.

Starting from an analysis of optical illusion, Lipps concentrates on explaining empathetic acts in terms of perceptual acts. Aesthetic experiences, he contends, are perceptual encounters that cause a certain *resonance* within the *viewer*. When we resonate with objects, they elicit in us an "objectified self-enjoyment" since we enjoy them because of what we project in them in the first place and introject later. Here still following Vischer's analysis of the process, the process has a tripartite structure: first a projection, second an exchange, and third, a return. At the stage of the return, objectival forms seem to be expressive of a vitality similar to that of the human body and thus the objectival forms resonate harmoniously with us.[237] Lipps writes,

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[236] EIS 374

[237] It is important to remember that, whereas Gottingen was a center for mathematical and scientific research, Munich was at the end of the 19th century and at the turn of the 20th century a major artistic city with a wealth of inspirational examples in the areas of music, painting, sculpture, opera, theater, among others. The artistic surroundings of the city of Munich might

> In Wahrheit ist der Mensch dem Menschen das Schönste, oder kann es sein, weil er eben Mensch ist. Der Mensch, so müssen wir sagen, ist nicht schøn wegen seiner Formen, sondern die Formen sind schøn, weil sie Formen des Menschen, uns demnach für uns Träger menschlichen Leben sind.[238]

The qualities "perceived" in the forms as "carrier of human life" are then projected back into the object and seen as intrinsic qualities of it.

When I feel myself into a work of art, for example, or into a specific landscape, I follow its forms. For Lipps, like for many of his predecessors writing on the subject of the aesthetic experience, forms are what we can follow.[239] I understand these forms in terms of movements because I see them as carrying a life of their own. I describe the willow as weeping because of the downward movement of his branches, for example. We imitate the forms of the object, imputing movements to it, and projecting ourselves in it. We

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have had an influence on Lipps' emphasis on the human form as strategic for the aesthetic experience and more specifically on his account of the process of empathy as being first and foremost bodily based.

[238] "To the human body, truly the most beautiful thing there is or can be, is the human being, precisely because he or she is human. Thus we have to say that the human being is not beautiful on account of his or her form; rather, the forms are beautiful because they are forms of the human being, and thus they are for us a carrier of human life." Theodor Lipps, *Ästhetik: Psychologie Des Schönen Und Der Kunst* (Hamburg und Leipzig: L. Voss, 1903), Vol. 1 p.105. Hereafter APSK1. All translations mine.

[239] For the extant of the debate about the role played by forms in the aesthetic experience, see the introductory section of my chapter on Vischer.

ascribe to the object qualities similar to our own.[240] We transfer qualities similar to our own into the object.

Outer and Inner Imitation

So far, Lipps is virtually an unmodified Vischerian. Lipps' analysis of the role that imitation plays in empathy, however, is innovative. For Lipps, transference is due to our instinct to imitate, *Der Nachahmungstrieb,* which is separated into outer and inner imitation—*innere und äußere Nachahmungstriebe*.

Outer imitation describes an act in which movements are performed or executed outwardly. An example of this outer imitation would be my imitation of your movements when you teach me how to dance. This process only requires on my part an approximate reproduction of your gestures, a following of your movements. This imitation is based on perception (not an experience) of the rhythms and forms of these movements. While dancing together, your movements would be (and remain) yours, while my imitative approximation of your movements would remain mine. In Lipps' example of the acrobat, the acrobat's movements take place up in the air, while my imitations of her movements take place here below, where I stand between

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[240] See APSK1 187ff.

my fellow spectators. There are thus two sets of movements–one mine and the other the trapezist's. Lipps writes:

> Die äußere Nachahmung ist jener tatsachliche äußere Vollzug von Bewegungen. Dieser stehen neben den Bewegungen des Akrobaten. Sie geschehen da unten, wo ich tatsachlich stehe. Die Bewegungen des Akrobaten dagegen geschehen da oben.[241]

Imitation is an external execution of movements which "stand next" to the movements of the acrobat. They happen there below where I stand "actually." The movements of the acrobat, on the other hand, happen "above." Outer imitation can only be approximate since there is and could never be coincidence between two bodies. I can only perceive your movements and imitate them; I cannot experience them the way you do—from the inside, so to speak.

Outer imitation is thus, for Lipps, deficient. The outwardly imitated movements do not fully carry the meaning of the movement to the imitator. That is why when one is learning to dance by outwardly imitating the movement of an instructor, one is not dancing. Outward imitation can also fail to convey the meaning of the movements imitated to a third party. Not only would the reproduction of the movements of the trapezist be only

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[241] "Outer imitation is an actual external execution of movements, which are in addition to the acrobat's movements. The outer imitation happens here, where I actually stand. The movements of the acrobat, on the other hand, are up there." APSK1 122.

approximate, they might not even make sense for another observer. Similarly my imitation of your facial expression might not make sense to an observer, if it remained only a succession of movements. Movements alone, devoid of an overarching frame of reference in which to put them are difficult to grasp. Movements that do not seem motivated or goal oriented seem empty. Part of the complexity involved in charades is that in it bodily movements do not immediately convey meaning because 1) the frame of reference in which they would appear coherent is not given and 2) the movements are not directly expressions of inner conditions. Thus in order for the movements to make sense to the spectator, movements need to express the inner conditions that brought them forth. Lipps writes:

> Dass zumal der mimische Künstler in der letzteren Weise verfahren muss und nicht ohne ‚Sinn' auswendig gelernte Geberden und Bewegungen aneinanderreihen darf, wenn etwas von Wahrheit in seiner Mimik sein soll, ist von jedermann zugestanden.[242]

One needs to "work oneself into" (*hineinverarbeiten*) the "*Sinn"* appearing in those movements. One needs to unearth the meanings they convey by way of feeling oneself into the inner conditions and inner feelings that the movement expresses. Without this *felt* "meaning," imitation would only be the

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[242] "That a mime, in particular, needs to proceed in this way is understood by everyone. He cannot senselessly repeat rote learned countenances and movements one after another, if his mime is to convey something of the truth." Lipps Theodor Lipps, *Grundtatsachen Des Sellenlebens* (Bonn: M. Cohen, 1883), p.124. Translation mine.

completion of a sequences of movements based on sight (optic) and would not bear meaning. Lipps description of the necessity for a mime to get at, to feel oneself into the "*Sinn*"—into the motivations and the feelings of the character she tries to replicate—is very much aligned with method acting. Method acting[243] is characterized by the technique of feeling oneself into the emotional conditions—the character—in order to generate a realistic, life-like performance and to produce an empathetic feeling on the part of the audience.[244]

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[243] Konstantin Stanislavski's goal of "theatrical truth" was taken up in the 30's by the Group Theatre in New York and that in turn gave rise to "The Method" advocated by Lee Strasberg in the Actors Studio in the following two decades.

[244] Bertolt Brecht went the opposite direction and promoted a distanciation between the actors and the spectators. This was achieved through a disconnection between the inner states of the characters represented and the actor's delivery. The actors were asked to perform in such a ways as to not show the emotional conditions of their character in order to alienate the audience from those very inner states. Through declamation rather that delivery, Brecht endeavored to separate the viewer from the feelings of the character in order to put in relief the political dimension of the plays. While I admire Brechtian theater, I think that we are here confronted to one of the many instances in which the process of empathy as feeling oneself into is falsely opposed to the ability to think abstractly because *Einfühlung* is misunderstood as *Einsfühlung*. The process of *Einfühlung* is misunderstood as a complete identification between, in this case, the spectator and the actor. This complete identification would, if it were the case, indeed preclude a distance between the two subjects involved in the process. But, as Stein make abundantly clear, in empathy, there always remains a distance between the two. And thus, the spectator can simultaneously feel herself into the inner states of the character while retaining critical ability of her own. Brecht, like many artists and art theorists, may well have been influenced by Worringer's criticism of Lipp's valorization of empathy, for these very

In real life however, when we interact with other people we do not need to apply a given technique as in method acting. Rather, the instinct to imitate has two components. Outward imitation is supplemented by inner imitation. Both shape our encounter with others. We have a natural propensity to imitate the outer movements of other people. But this voluntary outer imitation, Lipps contends, not only brings us to outwardly reproduce kinesthetic movements seen in others,[245] but it also, at the same time, brings to givenness (to us) the feelings expressed in outward behavior but this time through a process of involuntarily inner imitation.

> The contemplation of the observed movement awakens the tendency to a corresponding self-activity; by corresponding we mean that which would be connected with the execution of such a movement in my own person.[246]

The process of inner imitation, around which *Einfühlung* in the aesthetic encounter revolves, is a process described by Makkreel as follows:

> Lipps characterized empathy as a process of inner imitation whereby a subject projects its own kinesthetic feelings into some object being attended to. This means surrendering one's own feeling of

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reasons. Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*.

[245] For further instances of this inner tendency to imitate see APSK1 120ff. and 191ff.

[246] EIS 380

> motion and transferring them into some perceived object to give it the appearance of motion.[247]

However, Lipps' analysis of empathy is not confined to the aesthetic experience in the world of nature, nor to the direct contemplation of artworks. Lipps had extended his analysis as far back as his 1905 *Das Wissen von fremden Ichen*.[248] Lipps applies his insights into the empathetic process analyzed in terms of the aesthetic experience to psychology. Lipps extends his analysis of the transference taking place in the empathetic moment of aesthetic experience to our encounter with other individuals. Empathy becomes not only one of the ways in which we may gain a knowledge of others, but it also frames and structures our encounter with others. As with aesthetic experience, the instinct to imitate enables the transferencial moment of empathy. As a result, we vicariously gain access to other individuals' experiences.

The inner imitation enables the observer to feel, for example, the joy in a radiant smile, the shame in a blushing visage. *Einfühlung*—as inner imitation—thus enables us to access the inner states of our fellow humans.

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[247] Rudolf A. Makkrel, "From Simulation to Structural Transportation: A Diltheyan Critique of Empathy and Defense of *Verstehen*," in *Empathy and Agency: The Problem of Understanding in the Human Sciences*, ed. Hans Herbert Kögler and Karsten R. Stueber (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p.182.

[248] Theodor Lipps, "Das Wissen Von Fremden Ichen," in *Psychologische Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1905).

Through *Einfühlung,* we can understand someone else's inner feelings or, rather, to be true to Lipps' description of the process, we should say that we can, through an inner imitation, *feel* into their feelings. The specificity of the decisive moment of *Einfühlung* stems from the fact that while I tend to outwardly imitate the movements or countenance, the same tendency produces an unconscious inner imitation of it. This inner imitation allows me to partake in what gave rise to the movements or the countenance in the first place. I experience the inner feelings of the other empathetically. As Stein explicates Lipps' reasoning:

> A witnessed gesture arouses in me the impulse to imitate it. I do this at least 'inwardly,' if not expressly. Moreover, I have the impulse to express all of my experiences. Experience and expression are so closely associated that when one occurs it pulls the other after it. Thus we participate in the experience of the gesture together with this gesture. But, since the experience is experienced 'in' the foreign gesture it does not appear to me as mine but as another's.[249]

This felt sharing of the content of the other's experience is, however, not based on an inference about the inner motivations of foreign individuals. Lipps, in fact, insists on the non-inferential character of the structure of the act of empathy. He vehemently denies that empathy is:

> the name for any inference; rather it is the name for an original [originary] and not further derivable, at the same time most wonderful act,

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[249] OPE 22, translation modified.

> which is different from an inference, indeed absolutely incompatible [with it].[250]

Einfühlung does not provide an *insight* into inner states and motivations but rather an "in feeling."[251] An insight into inner states and motivations" would have to be derivative, whereas "in feeling" is not. It is direct, or as Stein puts it, empathy presents me with the immediate givenness of a non-primordial feeling. In-feeling depends on the distinction Lipps makes between inner and outer imitation (*äußere Nachahmung und innere Nachahmung*). Lipps writes, "*Auf die deutliche Scheidung dieser innere von den aussere Nachahmung kommt nun hier alles an.*"[252]

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[250] Lipps, "Das Wissen Von Fremden Ichen," p.713. Such a statement puts Lipps in direct conflict with Wispé's description of Lipps analysis of empathy. Wispé writes: "He [Lipps] hypothesized that we understand the feelings of others by a process of analogical inferences based on imitating the expressive movements of those others in our imagination […] we relate the imagined movements to our own past experiences and make inferences about the other person's feelings." Lauren Wispé, *The Psychology of Sympathy*, *Perspectives in Social Psychology* (New York: Plenum Press, 1991), p78. Lipps does not do this at all.

[251] This distinction between *Einsicht* (insight) and *Einfühlung* (in feeling) is important for Lipps. Etymologically, insight means to "see in" and thus dwells on the side of knowledge and ideas. Insight is an interpretation based on inference and thus mediated. *Einfühlung,* means etymologically to "feel in" and thus implies feelings and embodiment, straddling the line between soma and psyche, as it were. Moving away from an understanding of others' inner condition in terms of inference, Lipps favors the process of empathy which leads to an access to the other's inner feelings but this time understood in terms of a perceptual act.

[252] "The difference between outer and inner imitation is crucial, everything depends on it." APKS1 121.

A frequent criticism of empathy misunderstands the distinction between outer and inner imitation. Outer imitation supposedly allows for analogical insight into the motivations and inner experiences of another. Inner imitation then becomes a mysterious *deus ex machina* to explain empathy proper. In this simplistic schema, insight would be based on a tripartite structure running as follows. First an outer imitation, second an analogical inference, which, third, would produce the derivative insight into the meaning of the other's experience by inference. On the other side of this simplistic schema, in-feeling would proceed, who knows how, from the process of inner imitation—a perceptual sharing of the content of the other's experience. Fortunately, this is not what Lipps is suggesting. The same tendency that makes outer imitation possible resulting from the perception of someone else's movement produces or instill in the viewer inner conditions, or what Lipps also calls inner imitations. In Lipps words, "*Optische Wahrnehmungen fremder Bewegungen tragen mittelbar die Tendenz in sich, bestimmte innere Zuständlichkeiten zu wecken.*"[253] This is why Lipps insists that empathy is not dependent upon an analogical inference. Indeed in empathy, there is no need for it.[254]

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[253] "External perception of foreign movements bear within themselves the tendency to awaken specific inner conditions." APSK1 133.

[254] This could be seen as a foreshadowing of the discovery of the mirror neurons. Neuro-imaging has shown that the observation of specific behaviors

I do not infer them from my perception of the outward countenance; I experience them. When surrounded by laughing people, we tend to feel joyous. We do not necessarily even imitate or replicate the "laughing" visage or joyous countenance of the other; nevertheless, the feelings that gave rise to the laughing is given to us. We participate and feel the joy that they expressed in this laugh. [255] Their joy is my joy, or better said, there is an experience of joy in which all partake.[256] Lipps writes:

> Damit nun ist jenes eigentliche, entscheidende Moment der Einfühlung bezeichnet. Es besteht darin, dass ich in der Betrachtung der Bewegungen

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in others tends to generate a neuronal activity in the same sphere as the one that would be required of the observer to actually go through the movements observed herself. For example, it has be shown that "regions associated with the affective experience of pain (ACC and AI) are activated both during one's own experience of pain (self-pain) and when witnessing another in pain (other-pain)." This mirroring or inner imitation (albeit here at the neuronal level) seems to point towards the possibility of interpersonal sensitivity, resulting from a perceptual overlap, a feeling in. And if so, one could ask with Jean Decety and Daniel Batson in these "shared processes, does the awareness of whose experience is whose remain clear? That is when a person reacts emotionally on witnessing someone else react emotionally, is there a loss of self-other distinctiveness, or is self-other distinctiveness maintained—and possibly even heightened?" Decety and Batson, "Editorial: Social Neurosciences Approaches to Interpersonal Sensitivity," p.156.

[255] I experience it fully, if there is no other tendency stopping me from doing so OPE 12.

[256] For further example of complete identification between self and other but specifically in the act of aesthetic contemplation, see APSK1 122-126.

> solche innere Zuständlichkeiten oder Weisen eines inneren Verhaltens einfühlend erlebe.[257]

This moment of inner imitation is described by Lipps as the moment of the full experience of empathy. It occurs when the experiences of the foreign I, so far perceived as an object is now fully experienced by me but not as foreign. This is the receptive side of empathy. Lipps goes even further and states that during the experience of full empathy, the foreign I is not, properly speaking, an object anymore since it is not perceived from opposite me, i.e., as a *Gegenstand,* but experienced from the inside, so to speak.[258]

To return to Lipps' example of the acrobat, in full empathy, I am not below reproducing the movements of the acrobat above; rather, in inner imitation, I identify myself with the feelings of the acrobat. I am, so to speak, *in* the movement *with* him. The separation between us two no longer avails. I perceive inwardly what the acrobat experiences, I feel myself in him. Lipps writes:

> Völlig anders dagegen verhalt es sich, für mein Bewusstsein nämlich, mit jener inneren Nachahmung. In ihr findet keine Scheidung statt zwischen dem Akrobaten da oben, und mir da

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[257] "We now have the real decisive moment of empathy. During the observation of the movements inner conditions or indications of inner behavior are empathetically lived through," APSK1 134, translation mine.

[258] The usages of inner/outer metaphors to qualify the experience's sphere of occurrence is simplistic at least if not downright confusing. Alas, it will have to do until we introduce Stein's distinction between primordial and non-primordial experience.

> unten, sondern ich identifiziere mich mit ihn, ich fühle mich in ihm und an seiner Stelle.[259]

Important in this quote is Lipps' insistence upon the fact that in contradistinction to outer imitation, in which I imitate the acrobat's perceived movements from the outside, where my movement is next to his movement, where his experience and mine are separated, in inner imitation there is no separation—*Scheidung*—between the feelings of the acrobat up in the air and mine below. There is an inner coincidence between his experience and mine, in fact his experience and mine are one. Lipps contends that there is a complete identification between him and me. *I feel myself in* him in his place. Lipps writes:

> Und zum Anderen :—Ich fühle zugleich dies alles in dem Akrobaten, und nur in ihm. Ich habe nicht nebeneinander einmal das Bewusstsein, dass er fühlt, und zum andern mein Gefühl, sondern das Gefühl ist nur einmal da. Auch hier mit einem Wort, findet jenes oben betonte ‚identifizieren' statt.[260]

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[259] "My consciousness of inner imitation, on the other hand, functions completely differently. In it there is no separation between the acrobat above and me below. Rather, I identify myself with him, I feel myself *in* him and *in his place*." APSK1 121, emphasis added, translation mine.

[260] "Furthermore, I simultaneously feel all this in the acrobat, and only in him. I do not have simultaneously, on the one hand, the consciousness that he feels and, on the other, my feeling. Rather, the feeling is simply given. In a word, an identification takes place." APSK1 134, translation mine.

This state is described by Lipps as a state in which I am one with the object, when "the antithesis between myself and the object disappears, or, rather, no longer obtains."[261]

> Aesthetic enjoyment is thus not related to the object […] rather its characteristics consists in this—that there is no separation in it between my pleased ego and that with which I am pleased; in it both are one and the same self, the immediately experienced ego.[262]

The lack of separation between the object and the self sets apart Lipps' position from Vischer's. Or as Katz puts it:

> Lipps, for one insisted, that in artistic contemplation the subject enters into the object and is no longer conscious of the imitative activity of his muscles or his gestures. Since the activity is involuntary, his imagination dominates his entire being so that he is no longer conscious of the *as-if* activity. He becomes the object and is entirely identical with it.[263]

The ground for full empathy to occur is thus that in the moment of empathy, there cannot be an "I" conscious or aware of the perceptions or sensations of its own self.

Rather, I feel the inner activities of my "I" in the other but not in myself.

> In a word I am now with my feeling of activity entirely and wholly in the moving figure. Even spatially, if we can speak of the special extent of

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[261] EIS 376

[262] EIS 375-6

[263] Katz, *Empathy, Its Nature and Uses*, p.87.

> the ego, I am in its place. I am transported into it. I am in so far as my consciousness is concerned entirely and wholly identical with it. Thus feeling myself active in the observed human figure, I feel also in it free, facile, proud. This is aesthetic imitation and this imitation is at the same time aesthetic empathy.[264]

In this complete moment of inner coincidence, there cannot be, for Lipps, any perceptions or sensations of self or other available; there is only the experience had by the non-individuated "I." What Lipps is arguing for here is that as long as the experience of *Einfühlung* is lived through, there is an absorption in it which precludes a distinction between the subject *of* the experience in the nominative form, (the ego, the self), and the subject *of* the experience in the genitive form (the other). At this level *Einfühlung* is non-egological. In other words, no one is engaged in the experience.

The lack of differentiation between the object and subject and the concomitant "feeling of oneness" is the ground of Stein's criticism. More specifically, the lack of differentiation between subject and object when applied to Lipps' description of the experience of empathy in intersubjectivity explains Stein's disparagement because it points toward a contagion or a complete identification, which as such would preclude empathy in the first place.

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[264] EIS 379

Edith Stein's Objections

Stein's criticism of Lipps is, to put it succinctly, that she denies that there is or should ever be a complete identification between two subjects during the moment of empathy. She writes:

> That the subject of the […] empathized experience in this second form of […] empathy is not properly an object is in agreement with our conception. But we do not agree that there is a complete coincidence with the […] empathized 'I' that they become one.[265]

For Lipps, feeling oneself into has three moments: imitation and feeling-into, coincidence and "feeling-within," and then separation and projection. The complete inner coincidence—the feeling *within* is what Lipps designates as the moment of full empathy. At that moment, one could say "there is" an experience but one without subject or object.

The fact that the other's experience and mine are one, that they are not distinct is right, according to Stein. She writes: "Lipps description of the experience of empathy agrees with ours in many respects [since] Lipps depicts empathy as an 'inner participation' in foreign experience."[266] Stein, however, sharply disagrees with Lipps, about the *quality* of this inner participation. For Lipps, in the moment of feeling within, there is a complete inner coincidence. In other words, at the moment of inner coincidence

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[265] OPE 13

[266] OPE 12

described by Lipps, an identification takes place. Stein denies the possibility of a complete identification. She accuses Lipps of straight confusion,

> What led Lipps astray in his description was the confusion of self-forgetfulness, through which I can surrender myself to any object, with a dissolution of the 'I' in the object.[267]

She asserts and insists that empathy or *Einfühlung* is not *Einsfühlung* (a feeling of oneness). There is no overlapping of my own experience with the experience of the foreign individual. Such an overlapping would mean either that the subject looses itself or that the subject subsumes the otherness of the other under its own. Following Lipps description, at that very moment of overlapping or inner coincidence, one could of course speak of an experience that is given, but not given to discrete entities. She continues, and if not given to discrete entities then to whom exactly? She asks further, and if the experience is "subjectless" how can it be conductive to an understanding of the other's experience? What other and other in respect to whom? Stein argues that what Lipps is lacking is a differentiation of the *quality of appearance* of the other's inner experiences, in me and in him. She writes:

> Lipps confuses the two following acts: (1) being drawn into the experience at first given objectively and fulfilling its implied tendencies with (2) the transition from non-primordial to primordial experience.[268]

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[267] OPE 17

[268] OPE 13

Consider Stein's concrete assessment of Lipps' well known example of the acrobat. Stein writes: "I am not one with the acrobat but only 'at' him. I do not actually go through his motions but *quasi*."[269] Thus the distinction between self and other avails, there is no overlapping of experience nor even a feeling of oneness. "Lipps also stresses, to be sure, that I do not outwardly go through his motions."[270] Indeed for *Einfühlung* to obtain, I cannot be solely reduplicating the movements of the acrobats by imitating the perceived patterns and rhythms of these movements, for that does not give me access to their meaning.[271] Stein remarks: "But neither is what "inwardly" corresponds to the movements of the body, the experience that "I move," primordial; it is non-primordial for me."[272] While the movements of the body are given outwardly in perception, what is given inwardly is the content of the trapezist's own experience of movement—the "I move." I am, however, not moving per se, but I experience the "I move" *of the trapezist*. My experience of the "I move" is different from the trapezist's experience of it, or even my experience of it were I to be in the trapezist's place. The content of the experience appears to both of us but in a radically *different* manner. It has a

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[269] OPE 16

[270] OPE 16

[271] See "Outer and Inner Imitation" above.

[272] OPE 16

different quality of appearance for me and for him. This crucial distinction in the manner of appearing of the experience is based upon the fact that the experience of the "I move" of the acrobat *originates* in him; it issues from him. Stein will thus qualify the acrobat's experience as *primordial*. My empathized experience of the "I move" does *not* originate in me but in the acrobat; it does not issue from me—for me the experience is non-primordial. Stein adds:

> And in these non-primordial movements I feel led, accompanied, by his movements. Their primordiality is declared in my non-primordial movements which are there for me in him (again understood as experienced, since the pure bodily movement is also perceived outwardly).[273]

Thus, Stein objects, there is neither overlapping experience, nor "identification" with the acrobat, as Lipps would have it. If that were the case the experience resulting from this overlapping would be given to a "we" that has yet to be differentiated into the I and the other individual. As Sawicki puts it:

> Lipps for his part had accorded priority to the original unity of experiencing and understanding within the flow of non-differentiated, ecstatic, engaged subjectivity; this was the assumed basis for the possibility of subsequent "return" to communion in discrete instances of engagement with persons and artworks.[274]

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[273] OPE 16

[274] Marianne Sawicki, *Body, Text, and Science: The Literacy of Investigative Practices and the Phenomenology of Edith Stein*, *Phenomenologica V. 144* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), p.62. Hereafter BTS.

And if empathy were complete overlapping how could the individuals involved in the process return at the end of the experience each to their own body? To say the least, this would be problematic. As Sawicki summarizes,

> Your question arises instead from out of the midst of the experience of empathy, during which the individuality of I's allegedly is dissolved. How, you ask, would one know which body to re-identify with at the conclusion of such an experience? What tells an I whether in this particular case it has been driven by the 'instinct to express,' or the one driven by the 'instinct to follow'? When the acrobatic show is over, one of us returns to self-awareness wearing tights, the other trousers; how does each then pick up the thread of on-flowing recognition?[275]

Stein furthers her criticism by pointing to the fact that if the spectator were to reflect on the quality of the givenness of the experience, he would notice the different qualities of primordiality of feeling that originated in me on the one hand and non-primordiality of one's that did not on the other. She writes,

> Every movement the spectator makes is primordial. For example, he may pick up his dropped program and not 'know' it because he is living entirely in empathy. But should he reflect in the one instance as in the other (for which it is necessary for this "I" to carry out the transition from one cogito to the other), he would find in one instance a primordial and in the other a non-primordial givenness.[276]

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[275] BTS 99

[276] OPE 16

She concludes by saying: "And this non-primordiality is not simple but is a non-primordiality in which the foreign primordiality becomes apparent."[277]

Once Stein has discredited the claim that there is an identification then the inner imitation can no longer do the work it was supposed to do. Without identification, imitation gives me an experience of my own, not an experience of some one else.

> By the means indicated, I do not arrive at the phenomenon of foreign experience but at an experience *of my own* that was aroused in me by the foreign gestures witnessed.[278]

Still, while Stein is right to criticize Lipps' lack of differentiation between, the quality of appearance of the content for me, and for the acrobat, her accusation of confusing *Einfühlung* with *Einsfühlung* is a little unfair. As Stueber writes:

> Stein accuses Lipps of confusing empathy (*Einfühlung*) with a more mystical feeling of oneness (*Einsfühlung*) with the other person or object. Admittedly, Lipps says that empathy, especially aesthetic empathy, leads to a complete identification between the observer and the movements of the observed person or objects. [… But] Lipps use of the identification terminology in

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[277] OPE 16

[278] OPE 23, emphasis added translation modified. In fact, the English translation says the opposite. It says, "but at an experience of my own that arouses in me the foreign gesture witnessed." The German, on the contrary, says, "*sondern zu einem eigenen Erlebnis, das die fremde gesehene Gebärde in mir wachruft*." Stein, *Zum Problem Der Einfühlung*, ed. M. Antonia Sondermann, *Stein Gesamtausgabe* (Freiburg: Herder, 2008), p.25.

> order to explicate the phenomenon of empathy does not signify a complete loss of the self into its object.[279]

Indeed, Lipps in fact mentions that when I come out of the experience of *Einfühlung*, I see myself moving, or rather I feel myself active in movements under the acrobats as I reflect upon the difference between his and my movements. I feel myself as the one doing the reflection. At that moment, there is again two "I's," the acrobat's and mine. Lipps writes:

> Gewiss kann ich die Scheidung zwischen dem Akrobaten und mir, zwischen seinem Tun und dem meinigen vollziehen, in der nachträglichen Betrachtung. Aber nicht darum handelt es sich hier. Sondern die Frage ist, was ich erlebe in dem Augenblick, in welchem ich der Wirkung des Nachahmungstriebes unterliege. Die Frage ist, wie diese Wirkung meinem Bewusstsein unmittelbar sich darstellt. Und da müssen wir sagen: In dieser unmittelbar erlebten Wirkung des Nachahmungstriebes besteht um so gewisser, je intensiver sie ist, nur jene Identität. Ich erlebe keine Zweiheit, sondern volle Einheit.[280]

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[279] Stueber, *Rediscovering Empathy: Agency, Folk Psychology, and the Human Sciences* , p.8.

[280] "Indeed I can differentiate between the acrobat and myself, between his and my action in subsequent observation. But that is not at issue here. Rather, what is at issue is the experience I undergo when I instinctually imitate. The question is how the effects of the imitation immediately impact my consciousness. And to this question we must reply: in these unmediated

Whether this is sufficient to fully reply to Stein's objection that a complete identification precludes a return to self is, however, doubtful. The force of her criticism lies in the fact that the experience of an other's inner state is given to me in a distinct mode—which Lipps either overlooks or denies.

Conclusion

There are two opposing problems with the concept of empathy. On the one hand, if one separates two individuals utterly and only allow for a knowledge of others only via inference, we will never have a route to a concept of empathy that could describe how we experience others, other people's inner states, and have the experience of intersubjectivity that we do in fact experience. Thus, despite the older provenance and widespread acceptance, models of knowledge of others based solely on analogical inferences, such as the one espoused my Mill, are unsatisfactory.

Lipps is acutely aware of this problem and his theory is meant to circumvent the shortcomings of theories of our experience of others based on inferences by analogy. He wishes to place the unity of two subjects in the experience of empathy front and center in his theory. However, this is precisely where the opposed difficulty with the concept of empathy lies,

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experiences, identity becomes surer the more intense they are. I experience full unity and no duality." APSK1 121-2, translation mine.

namely that collapsing the difference between two subjects is as problematic as starting with them utterly distinct. While Stein's criticisms of Lipps are at times a little unfair, her criticism is important because she clearly understands the problems that collapsing two subjects is likely to lead to. On the one hand, it is dubious that such a subjectively undifferentiated experience could ever be given phenomenologically—given to whom? as Stein's points out. This difficulty opens the way for the accusation that Lipps is sliding back into metaphysics. On the other hand, were it actually to happen, it is not clear that there would be any possible grounds for the subsequent separation of the subjects. It is quite possible that the dispute between Stein and Lipps is based, at least on part, on an infelicitous choice of terminology on the part of Lipps. Be that as it may, Stein is clearly making a substantive point that is not clearly and well articulated by Lipps. Stein knows and teaches us that any working and adequate concept of empathy has to steer between the Charybdis of completely separating our subjects and the Scylla of completely collapsing them in one's theory of empathy. In the former case, there is no real empathy possible and certainly any analogic cases of an experience of others would be no help in understanding a genuine and indubitable experience of intersubjectivity. On the other hand, collapsing distinct subjects in the experience of empathy comes perilously close to both begging the question, as well as giving us a theory that explains intersubjectivity at the price of a coherent

understanding of my subjectivity alone. In straddling the line between holism and atomism, Stein has a model of intersubjectivity that predates Merleau-Ponty's and Waldenfeld's similar assessment:

> Interlacing as an asymmetrical linkage of self-transgressing elements precludes both holism and atomism. The non-coincidence of myself with myself and others prevents integration of myself and others into a totalizing whole […] Conversely, the non-difference between myself, the world and others militates against a process of isolation where a single being would congeal in its separateness. The double negation implicit in non-coincidence and non-difference preserves single beings from dissolving into the whole, and it preserves the whole of splintering into radical fragmentation. Constituted by this double 'no,' interlacing diverges from both total fusion and particularistic dispersal.[281]

In today's parlance, one could say that Stein's reformulation of the concept of empathy (*Einfühlung*) was meant to theorize a "feeling into" that is egoic in origin while at the same time also other-centered. The act of empathy entails that one shares content with, but neither overlays nor displaces the other. The act of empathy is an act of "in feeling" that decenters the self enough for it to gather difference in sameness and sameness in difference.

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[281] Waldenfels commenting on Merleau Ponty's "interlacing" Bernhard Waldenfels, *Deutsch-Französische Gedankengänge*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp.330, 364-65.

Chapter 4

The Phenomenology of Empathy

Edith Stein 1891-1942

Introduction

In her 1917 treatise, Edith Stein wanted to address not only the shortcomings of the ways her predecessors had analyzed empathy, but also to address a difficulty inherent in any treatment of empathy, namely, how we are to describe our access to another's experiences without simultaneously suggesting that we identify with the other and thus subsume their otherness. If we ever completely identify with another, we lose the distance necessary for empathy. In a full identification, the separation between self and other does not obtain and as such it cannot be defined as an instance of participation in the foreign, for there is in such a case no foreign element of which to speak. The other has been subsumed under the same. On the other hand, if we argue that we cannot fully identify with another, if we argue that there is some transcendent otherness, it seems that it would be impossible for us to have access to another's experience at all. Stein realizes that although, in empathy, there is a moment of common givenness of the experiences, and, as such, the process seems to straddle the line between what is other and

what is mine, she insists on the separation between self and other.[282] For, as Derrida puts it:

> Once you ground some privilege to gathering but not to disassociating, then you leave no room for the other, for the radical otherness of the other, or for the radical singularity of the other. Disassociation is not an obstacle to society but the condition […] I can address the other only to the extent that there is separation.[283]

In pursuit of an adequate analysis of empathy, Stein wants to avoid another pair of problematic alternatives. She is intent on avoiding the abstract universalism of Husserl's transcendentalism, on the one hand, and Scheler's personalism on the other. Both of which, she argues, are in their own way solipsistic.

Against Husserl, she argues that, in empathy, the same experience can be given (albeit differently) to different persons. Of course, we cannot share in all aspects of someone else's experience. Stein argues that a person is made up of four strata.[284] It is helpful to depict them in the shape of the capital

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[282] If one compares empathy with the process of the access to the other's experience at play in the psychoanalytical setting, one can say that the empathetic listening consists in a somewhat contradictory process where a momentary identification with the patient is combined with a distancing from excessive fusion.

[283] Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, trans. John D. Caputo, *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy,* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p.14.

[284] With this contention, Stein furthers Scheler's account of the four nested levels of the individual.

letter I. The bottom strata is the physical, i.e., our physical organs and physiological processes of our body. This strata enables our interface with the physical world. Chains of causes and effects play across this surface when one acts upon the world or the world acts upon one. The top strata (the top of the I) is personal individuality. This surface connects one to the realm of values, in which one creates and receives meaning. Neither of these two layers can be shared. But between those two layers are two sharable realms—the realms of sentience and intelligence. These two realms are open to each other and let influences pass up and down between the physical and the personal. Furthermore, what happens in these two realms can be shared or in-felt with other persons. Interestingly, due to the permeability of the different stratas, influences can travel upwards, as when a physical cause impinging on the body influences the psychological level or downwards, as for example when one feels invigorated physically by a thought or an artistic experience. Music is the traditional example. Stein defends the thesis that not only can influences pass between the different layers of the individual, but also between individuals. This very connectivity makes clear that nothing really stops at the border of my individuality. As an individual, I am not only influenced but also constituted by transpersonal structures and institutions. Clearly, such a thesis vindicates MacIntyre's claim that

> [I]n her selective uses of Husserl's formulation, Stein nowhere adopts any that commit her to Husserl's developed conception of the

> transcendental ego. She presents herself at least by default as an Husserlian realist.[285]

Stein also distances herself from the opposite extreme, namely, Scheler's personalism. For Scheler, acts or experiences are neither un-sharable, nor interchangeable. In contradistinction to logical operations, which can be the same independently of the executor, acts cannot be essentially the same, for Scheler, if executed by different "I's." The non-substitutability of persons stands in sharp opposition to Husserl's program, and is specifically in conflict with Husserl's transcendental ego. Scheler writes:

> Person is the concrete and essential unity of the being of acts of different essences which in itself […] precedes all essential act-differences […] the being of the person is therefore the 'foundation' of all essentially different acts.[286]

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[285] MacIntyre, *Stein : A Philosophical Prologue, 1913-1922*, p.76. Stein was not alone in this respect. Two of her Gottingen colleagues, previously of the Munich circle around Lipps, namely Scheler and Reinach, were also avowedly phenomenological realists and dubious of Husserl's transcendental turn. So was also Roman Ingarden.

[286] Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values; a New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*, [5th rev. ed., *Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.383. Further examples of Scheler's anti-transcendental program can be found *inter alia* in Max Scheler, "Die Idole Der Selbsterkenntnis," in *Vom Umsturz Der Werte. Die Abhandlungen Und Aufsätze Zweite Durchgesehene Auflage* (Leipzig: Der Neue geist-verlag, 1923), p.167; Max Scheler, "The Idols of Self-Knowledge," in *Selected Philosophical Essays* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.96.

In a sense, both the transcendental universality of Husserl's ego and the singularity of Scheler's person end up with a similar difficulty, namely, with a sort of solipsism. In both cases, the experiences of the other are inaccessible to me. For Husserl, one can only share into scientific and logical structures, since they are equally the same for all. But such transcendental structures exclude the individual person's particularity and hence her particular experiences.[287] Husserl's early analysis suggests that empathy into someone's particular experiences is impossible. On the other hand, Scheler's personalism renders the other individual so distinctive and her experience so particular and irreducible that the lack of commonality precludes the possibility of any feeling in. Scheler insists that one can feel *with*, i.e., sympathize with another's experiences but he denies that we can feel *in* them, i.e., empathize. Stein's goal is to reconcile these two positions. She argues that while there are some universal transcendental structures that inform personhood, there is at the same time specificity to each individual and both are conditions of possibility for the empathetic sharing of the content of another's experience.

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[287] Stein's criticisms of Husserl were often oblique for obvious academic reasons, as she suggestively remarks in a letter to Ingarden, February 3, 1917, that she had "not yet had the chance to confess my heresy to the Master." Stein, *Self-Portrait in Letters, 1916-1942*, trans. Josephine Koeppel, *The Collected Works of Stein, Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Discalced Carmelite, 1891-1942* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1993), p.8.

The Givenness of Empathy and the Phenomenological Method

Stein defines empathy as the experience of foreign consciousness, an inner participation in foreign experiences. While she recognizes that there have been different ways to analyze inner participation in foreign experiences, she argues that most of them are deficient. Empathy does not involve complete identification, which, as such, precludes the distinction between self and other necessary for empathy into *foreign* experience. Nor is empathy a form of imitation. Imitation, unlike identification, retains the distinction between self and other. But what is given to me is not another's experience but an experience of my own triggered by another's bearing. Lastly, Stein differentiates empathy from an understanding of others acquired either through analogical inference or identification or imitation. In analogical inferences, we may deduce a more or less accurate *insight [Einsicht]* into another's motivations. Empathy, [*Einfühlung*], on the other hand, involves an *erleben*, a living-of of their experiences.

Stein analyzes empathy in terms of its givenness. She clarifies the status of the givenness of another's experience to us. In her own words, she summarizes her project as follows: "What is foreign experience in its

givenness? How does the perception of foreign experience look? We must know this before we can ask how this perception occurs."[288]

The emphasis on the givenness of a phenomenon is, of course, the hallmark of the phenomenological method. This methodology allows Stein to avoid some of the pitfalls of previous analyses. As Stein explains:

> It is self-evident that this first question [of the givenness of empathy] cannot in principle be answered by a genetic-psychological investigation of cause for such an investigation actually presupposes the being whose development it is seeking to ground. […] Genetic-psychological investigation here does not mean an investigation of the development stages of the psychic individual. Rather the stages of psychic development (the type of child, youth, etc.) are included in descriptive psychology. To us genetic psychology and psychology which explains causally are synonymous. […] We distinguish between the two questions; (1) What psychological mechanisms functions in the experience of empathy? (2) How has the individual acquired this mechanism in the course of his development?[289]

Stein objects that, in genetic theories, the distinction between a descriptive analysis of the psychic functions in play during an empathetic act and an analysis of the causal ground of these mechanisms is often confused. One might add that with Mill the logical ground comes into play too. The experiences, how we came to have these types of experiences, and how we

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[288] OPE 21, previously quoted.

[289] OPE 21-3

could give an inductive argument for their veracity are all fused. In contradistinction to these confused approaches, Stein takes a strict phenomenological approach. As she writes, "The goal of phenomenology is to clarify and thereby to find the ultimate basis of all knowledge. To reach this goal it considers nothing that is in anyway way 'doubtful,' nothing that can be eliminated."[290] Stein practices the phenomenological reduction by concentrating exclusively on the givenness of the phenomenon. She separates off questions of logic and cause by ignoring anything that can be in any way doubtful.[291] What is given in experience is given immediately and as such questions of circumstances, causes, and even legitimacy simply do not obtain.

> All controversy over empathy is based on the implied assumption that foreign subjects and their experiences are given to us. Thinkers deal with the circumstances of the occurrence, the effects and the legitimacy of this givenness. But the most immediate undertaking is to consider the phenomenon of givenness in and by itself and to investigate its essence.[292]

Investigating the givenness in and by itself of the phenomenon of empathy, allows Stein to uncover the *essence* of the phenomenon of empathy—an essence that is, as she remarks, simply presumed by causal-genetic studies,

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[290] OPE 3

[291] "Indubitability," as Stein uses it, is not a question of the veracity of some claim, but rather a question of the givenness of my experience, i.e., its immediacy.

[292] OPE 3

even supposing that they are working with the bona fide essence of empathy. Stein summarizes her problematic as follows: "I recognize this basic problem to be the question of empathy as the perceiving (*Erfahrung*) of foreign subjects and their experience (*Erleben*)."[293]

She starts her description of the phenomenon of empathy with an example. She recounts how a friend told her about the loss of his brother. On the occasion of hearing about his loss, she becomes aware of his pain. Stein states that her concern is not with a description of how she arrived at this awareness—the awareness of the other's pain—since to explain how something has been caused or produced would imply a genetic analysis and genetic analyses rely on empirical psychology. Phenomenological inquiries distinguish themselves from empirical psychologies in that they concern themselves solely with the nature of the givenness of phenomenon itself, rather than with any putative causes of the phenomenon. Stein writes that when I become aware of my friend's pain, although I could investigate the causes of this pain, phenomenologically speaking I should ask:

> what kind of an awareness is this? I am not concerned here in going into the basis on which I infer the pain […]. I would like to know, not how I arrive at this awareness, but what it itself is.[294]

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[293] OPE 1

[294] OPE 6

In other words, Stein concerns herself with eidetic analysis proper. To remain within the phenomenological precepts of inquiry, Stein needs to eliminate everything that lies outside of the sphere of immediate perception. While genetic analyses concern themselves with an exploration of causes, her eidetic analysis investigates the nature of the phenomenon itself—what empathy *is*. As MacIntyre puts it, such a phenomenological investigation:

> involves a suspension of prior everyday belief and an exclusion of all the questions about whether what is presented in experience does or does not exist independently of and apart from experiences of it.[295]

A New Type of Causality: Sentient Causality

Historically, the problem with empathy, according to Stein, is related to the problem plaguing the cultural sciences.

> Earlier, people made unreasonable demands of natural science. It was to make natural occurrences 'intelligible' (perhaps to prove that nature was a creation of the spirit of god). As long as natural science made no objections to this, it could not develop properly. Today there is the opposite danger. Elucidating causally is not enough, but people set up causal elucidations absolutely as a scientific ideal. This would be harmless if this interpretation were confined to natural scientists. One could calmly allow them the satisfaction of looking down on 'unscientific' (because not 'exact')

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[295] MacIntyre, *Stein : A Philosophical Prologue, 1913-1922*, pp.76-77

> cultural science, if the enthusiasm for this method had not gripped cultural scientists themselves.[296]

The concept of the causality at work in the cultural sciences, which Stein terms sentient causality, is, of course, of a different kind than the concept of causality used by the natural sciences. She develops the concept of sentient causality in the eponymously entitled first treatise of her 1919 *Habilitationsschrift* itself entitled *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*.[297] This treatise augments Stein's understanding of empathy by asserting that the human person is living bodily, the interweaving of physical causality and intellectual motivation. This interplay is a passage of influences between the physical, the psychical, the soul, and the intellect.[298] Empathy is at the core of sentient causality. Empathy is the process by which we can feel in other people's experiences. Through empathy we can feel into other people's feelings and thus follow the intentional and the motivational processes underlying their actions or the connections giving rise to their experiences. We can let ourselves be led by the empathized content and run through sequences of connections. There is a difference between the way we follow causal connection and the way empathy follows a motivational

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[296] OPE 93-4

[297] Stein, "Sentient Causality," in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2000).

[298] See the figure of the "I" discussed above.

connection. When we follow the causal connections of natural science, we observe them from the outside, so to speak, they are observable, while motivational connections are only in-feel-able through empathy.

Indication v.'s Expression

Stein's distinction between natural causality and sentient causality is reflected in her distinction between indication and expression. Her own words are clear:

> How are sadness and a sad countenance related on the one hand, and fire and smoke on the other? Both cases have something in common: An object of outer perception leads to something not perceived in the same way. However, there is a different kind of givenness present. The smoke indicating fire to me is my 'theme,' the object of my actual turning-towards, and awakens in me tendencies to proceed in a further context. Interest flows off in a specific direction. The transition from one theme to another is carried out in the typical motivation form of: If the one is, then the other is, too. Sadness "being-co-given" in the sad countenance is something else. The sad countenance is not a theme that leads over to another one at all, but it is *at one with* sadness. This occurs in such a way that the countenance itself can step entirely into the background. The countenance is the outside of sadness. Together they form a natural unity.[299]

The smoke indicates fire, but does not express it. The smoke is not fire. Rather, I am lead from the smoke to the fire. I anticipate that there is a fire.

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[299] OPE 76-7, emphasis mine.

That anticipation can be fulfilled or not. The appearance of the smoke is an indicator for fire. It is distinct from the fire and requires an intermediary step, which is equivalent to the logical step of, "no smoke without fire." There is a conditional mediating premise reflecting a causal hypothesis. On the other hand, the frown *is* disapproving. It expresses disapproval. The expression is one with the countenance. The frown expresses its meaning, and our nature demands this expression. We are expressive.

> So far, we can conclude that feeling by its nature demands expression. The various types of expression are various essential possibilities. Feelings and expression are related by nature and meaning, not causally. The bodily expression, like other possible forms issuing from feeling and its meaning, is therefore also definitely experienced. For I not only feel how feeling is poured into expression and 'unloaded' in it, but at the same time I have this expression given in bodily perception.[300]

Just because countenances can be expressive, does not mean that they are this, strictly speaking. They can either be indicative or expressive. For instance, blushing can be caused by exertion or it can express shame. Exertion would cause the blushing, shame on the other hand can be the meaning of the blushing. The shame can be expressed in the blush.

> As we said earlier, there is a different relationship between shame and blushing than between exertion and blushing. While causal relationship is always announced in the form of if … then so that

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[300] OPE 53

> the givenness of one occurrence (be it psychic or physical) motivates a progression to the givenness of the other one, here the proceeding of one experience from another is experienced in purest immanence.[301]

Clearly, to make this distinction, the shame has to be given in the blushing in a different way from the exertion, just as the fire is indicated by the smoke in a different way than disapproval is given in the frown.

Eidetic Analysis

Stein structures her eidetic analysis around three questions:

(1) Are empathized experiences primordial or not?

(2) Are foreign experiences objectively given as something facing me or given experientially?

(3) Are they intuitively or non-intuitively given (and if intuitively, in the character of perception/presentation or of representation)?[302]

Stein's analysis of the distinction between acts of presentation and acts of representation is of paramount importance for the answer to these.

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[301] OPE 83-4

[302] OPE 19. Stein credits M. Geiger in his essay, "Über Das Wesen Und Die Bedeutung Der Einfühlung," in *Bericht Über Den Iv. Kongress Für Experimentielle Psychologie in Innsbruck* (Leipzig: Barth, 1911), p.33ff. for this tripartite interrogative analysis.

Presentational Acts

Presentational acts are acts in which the object of the presentation or the content of the presentation is there, live before me, i.e., it is primordially given. Acts of outer perception, for instance, are presentational acts. Stein writes:

> Outer perception is a term for acts in which spatio-temporal concrete being and occurring come to me in embodied givenness. This being has the quality of being there itself right now; it turns this or that side to me and the side turned to me is embodied in a specific sense. It is primordially there in comparison with sides co-perceived but averted.[303]

According to Stein, empathy, on the other hand, does not have its object in embodied givenness, i.e., it is different than outer perception.[304] During the experience of empathy, my body is not in pain, the content of your experience—the pain, is not primordially given to me, even if the act of empathy itself originates within me.

Beside outer perceptions, in which the objects in the world are primordially presented, there are also other objects given to us

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[303] OPE 6. In the original German, the word that I have here translated as "primordially" is *Originär*. Some scholars have chosen to translate it as "originary" (and correspondingly non-originary)—probably for its closeness to the German. Other scholars retain the original translation provided by Waltraut Stein, which reads "primordial" (and correspondingly non-primordial). I prefer "primordial" because it has the advantage of being an English word.

[304] OPE 19

primordially.[305] For instance, ideation is primordially given. For an example of ideation, Stein takes "the insight into a geometrical axiom." Ideation is, she writes, "the intuitive comprehension of essential states."[306] But whatever empathy might be, Stein rules out it being an ideation because empathy "deals with grasping the here and now." Ideations, such as insight into a mathematical axiom, on the other hand, do not. They do not refer to anything here and now. Since empathetic experiences are neither ideation nor outer perception, they are non-primordial. Our first question is hereby answered. As we shall see, however, they do share into the kind of indubitability that outer perceptions also possess.

Answering the second question, namely, whether the nature of empathy is objectively given or experientially given, is, as Stein remarks, a little trickier than answering the first question, namely, whether they are primordial or not. The problem lies with the exact nature of empathy itself. Empathy seems to have two sides to it. If I empathize with someone's sorrow, I have an experience given to me. Yet, this experience of my own announces "another's" experience. The sorrow neither is mine nor not mine. It announces the other.

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[305] Some experiences given in reflection are also primordially given as in the act of memory for example (but the reflective content of the past experiences is given non-primordially as we will see below) OPE 7, but let not get ahead of ourselves, we will attend to this later.

[306] OPE 7f.

Thus the foreignness of the empathetic experience of sorrow is dissimilar to seeing a table facing me. The feelings given in empathy do not stand opposite me; they do not have the objectivity of my perception of the table. Stein subsequently makes the same point when she says that inner perception would be better labeled inner intuition, since some of my "inner" intuitions have a non-primordial nature and are thus not perceptions properly speaking.

> Now we can already see the relationship between inner perception and empathy. Just as our own individual is announced in our own perceived experiences, so the foreign individual is announced in empathized ones. But we also see that in one case there is a primordial, while in the other a non-primordial, givenness of the constituting experiences. If I experience a feeling as that of another, I have it given twice: once primordially as my own and once non-primordially in empathy as originally foreign. And precisely this non-primordiality of empathized experiences causes me to reject the general term 'inner perception' for the comprehension of our own and foreign experience. Should one desire to stress what these experiences have in common; it would be better to say 'inner intuition' [*innere Anschauung*]. This would include then the non-primordial givenness of our own experiences in memory, expectation or fantasy.[307]

While the immediate givenness of empathy is akin to presentations, empathy is also akin to representations such as expectation, memory, or fantasy, that

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[307] OPE 34

are experiential and do not present an object before me. And our second question is hereby answered.

Representational Acts

To answer the third question about the intuitive status of empathy, let us investigate what empathy has in common with representations and what it does not. Representational acts differ from presentational acts in that they do not have their object there present immediately and primordially, rather the object is *vergegenwärtigt*, represented—it is made present in representation.

Stein begins her discussion of representation with an example. Consider memory, she says. Memory is an example of a representational act. Expectation and fantasy are two further ones. Memory turns out to be useful as structurally similar to empathy. Stein passes over the case of expectation quickly because it is parallel to memory, and she passes over fantasy since it is irrelevant for her purposes, as it turns out to be dissimilar to empathy since they are representations of the non-actual.

> The fantasized experiences are in contrast with memory because they are not given as a representation of actual experiences but as a non-primordial form of present experiences.[308]

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[308] OPE 9

Empathy, on the other hand, is, like memory, putatively a representation of actual experiences, albeit, unlike memory, not had by me in the first place. In the experience of memory, something actual is re-presented. In memory, an earlier act of perception is recalled to mind. The content of this earlier perception—which in the past—as a presentation—had a primordial character and was given immediately, when recalled in memory, looses its primordial character. The content of the act is not given to me immediately; it is mediated through the act of recalling, mediated through memory. Remembered states of feeling have the same structure. A *completed* act of memory is an act in which a past experience of the subject is represented to it. The representational act of having the memory, since it occurs right now, is itself a primordial act. The reflected contents of the representation, however—the past experience—is given now as non-primordial, even if in the past this experience was primordial at the specific "now" of its occurrence. However, similarly to empathy, in the process of remembering, I have to share in the original feeling of joy to represent it as having been mine.

In order to illustrate the workings of memory, let us take an example. I remember having enjoyed a particular chocolate cake. The memory of this enjoyment is carried out at this precise moment, it is a re-presentational act assuredly, but since it is carried out *now* it is primordial. What is non-primordial in this representation is its *content*. The joy felt while eating the cake is a past occurrence. I do not feel it live here right now; rather the joy

has been alive in the past. I return to it in reflection. In the past, it has been a "now" and thus as such was primordial, but now—as the content of the representation—it is past and thus non-primordial. I do not now have it immediately. It is mediated through the act of memory. The representational act of having the memory—right now—is a primordial act, but what is represented—the reflected content of the representation—is in itself non-primordial. Stein writes:

> The memory of a joy is primordial as a representational act now being carried out, though its content of joy is non-primordial. This act has the total character of joy, which I could study, but the joy is not primordially and bodily there, rather as having once been alive (and this 'once,' the time of the past experience, can be definite or indefinite). The present non-primordiality points back to the past primordiality. This past has the character of a former 'now.'[309]

The import of this analysis is that it suggests that the act of empathy unfolds in a manner parallel to representational acts, in particular, in a manner parallel to acts of memory. In memory, the reflected contents—the past memories—are non-primordial, yet appear within the primordial act of reflective representation. In the act of memory, "the present non-primordiality points back to the past primordiality." Empathy also follows such a structure. In the act of empathy, the non-primordiality of the content

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[309] OPE 8

of the other's experience that is given to me gives me the primordiality of the experience had by the other.

This pointing back has an immediacy and indubitability for both memory and empathy. In memory, the identity of the 'I' that is remembering with the 'I' that had the joy primordially must be given immediately since it is mediating the memory. Similarly, Stein claims that in the act of empathy, the foreign experience registers within me in a non-mediated way; it has an immediacy similar to the awareness of my own existence, i.e. it is in this way similar to a direct perception; it is not arrived at. As such, for Stein, it is indubitable. Strikingly she claims, "Just as our own individual is announced in our own perceived experiences, so the foreign individual is announced in empathized ones."[310] Of course, the difference between memory and empathy is that in empathy there are two subjects not one.

> These two subjects are separate and not joined together, as previously [in memory, expectation, or the fantasy of our own experience], by a consciousness of sameness or a continuity of experience.[311]

Representational acts have a tripartite structure,

> (1) The first stage, the emergence of the experience,
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> (2) The second stage, the fulfilling of it, and

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[310] OPE 34

[311] OPE 10-11

(3) The third stage, the comprehensive objectification of the explained experience.[312]

To flesh out the similarities and dissimilarities between acts of representation such as memory and acts of empathy, let us compare how such stages work, first in the case of memory and second in the case of empathy. How does the accomplishment of the act of remembering the joy I had eating a piece of chocolate cake unfold according to these stages? I remember my past experience of eating the chocolate cake and enjoying it. The first stage of this experience is its emergence—the memory of the joy emerges directly before me as a remembered *object*. In particular, the "present 'I' and the past 'I' face each other as subject and object."[313] This emergence has the character of primordiality. It emerges in the here and now. I have a direct awareness of it.

The second stage of the experience of the memory of the joy of eating the cake is when I am pulled into the reflected content of the memory. The reflected content is not primordial because it was had at a prior time. It took place in a past "now." I am pulled in it in such a way that the past memory is not before me as an object. At this moment, I am not "seeing" myself eating the cake—I am experiencing that *I* was eating it. I am again "at" the joy that

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[312] OPE 10

[313] OPE 8

I had the first time round. I can even savor the delicate texture of the ganache; I can feel the mousse melting in my mouth. I recognize myself as the "I" having that past joy. I am "at" this joy.

The third stage happens when I return to the first stage—outside of the remembered experience, facing my joy again as an object. After this return, my past experience is enhanced and has gained depth. I could also say that I have now a comprehensive objectification of a memory, that is, a memory proper. This return is what constitutes the memory as such. Although one can but does not have to go through the deepening of memory, these three stages must refer to three *moments* that any memory implicitly has or can have, or I would not experience the memory of the 'I' objectively before me as my 'I.'

Now let us turn to Stein's example of the unfolding of the act of empathy based on the fact that her friend told her that he had lost his brother and her subsequent awareness of his pain. What is the structure of her awareness of his pain? Stein writes:

> Here, too, we are dealing with an act, which is primordial as present experience though non-primordial in content. And this content […] when it arises before me all at once, it faces me as an object (such as the sadness I 'read in another's face'). But when I inquire into its implied tendencies (try to bring another's mood to clear givenness to myself), the content, having pulled me into it, is no longer really an [my] object [the sadness]. I am now no longer turned to the content but to the object [what "caused" the sadness] of it, I am *at* the subject of

> the content in the original subject's place. And only after successfully executed clarification, does the content again face me as an object.[314]

On the grounds that both are representational acts, Stein analyzes empathy using the same tripartite structure that she used for memory.

(1) At the first stage, in the emergence of the experience, I "read" the pain expressed in my friends tone or countenance. At this stage, his pain is before me as an object. It is external to me and I face it, from the outside, so to speak.

(2) At the second stage, during the fulfilling explication, my perspective changes as I empathize more fully with my friend's sadness. I get pulled into his sadness; his sadness is not an external object before me anymore. I am inside it, and as such have its object, the object of the grief before me, rather than the sadness per se. I am now at the object of the grief *with my friend.* There remains, however, two "I's" in the grief, the "I" empathizing and the "I" "having" the grief. The first "I" and the second "I" do not overlap; they do not fuse (as in Lipps). Rather, they are both turned toward an object of grief and in this sense are *with* each other.[315]

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[314] OPE 10

[315] And they are therefore not in complete identification with each other. Stein addresses the non-coincidence, of the two "I's" in her criticism of Lipps' interpretation of the act of full empathy in my previous chapter.

(3) At the third stage, during the comprehensive objectification of the explained experience, I withdraw from my friend's grief and face it again as an object but an object that I now understand better.

Some remarks are necessary here. While Stein says that in concrete cases not all of these steps are necessarily "run through" [*durchläuft*], she says that there *are* these three levels to the representational acts she considers.

> In all cases of the representation of experiences considered, there are these three levels of modalities of accomplishment even if in a concrete case people do not always go through all levels but are often satisfied with one of the lower ones.[316]

What she emphasizes here is that while it is true that just as in memory, I do not have to explicitly deepen my empathy, these three *moments* must have been implicit or have to be possible, if I am able to have any experience of empathy at all, even at the lower level.

> As far as memories are concerned, I think some tripartite structure must be involved. I must remember some affection which eating the chocolate cake occasioned, or it is hard to see how I could remember that *I* ate it. Furthermore, the memory of joy must be at least somewhat joyful, if I am to remember that *I* had the joy, even if I could be sorrowful now for its absence. When I remember what an old car looked like, although I do not have to think back to the experience of seeing the car, I have to be *able* to deepen the memory in that way, else I could not remember that *I* saw it. So memories always have an implicit affective content related to their objects as their condition of

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[316] OPE 10

> possibility.[317] I could clearly remember feeling joy and be utterly unable to remember what I was joyful about. Anxiety is probably a good example of such diffuse moods that do not have to have objects, but I do not think the opposite is possible. Memories of outer perceptions always need to be meditated by affections.[318]

There is a second aspect of memory, one that distinguishes it from empathy, namely, that in memory, the subject remembering is the same as the subject who had the experience remembered. The "I" in the present who remembers is the same person who in the past had the experience in the first place, although in the act of remembering these two are held distinct.

> In reflective activity, I comprehend the i-drenched character of the acts upon which I am reflecting. My reflection is *memory* if, between the i that is saturating the lived experience upon which I am reflecting and the I that I am, I can grasp a flowing sequence of i-to-i face-offs and identity-recognitions in any one of which I can reawaken as an i recognizable my own—without the recognizers ever fusing with the recognized in perfect identity at any stage.[319]

In memory, Stein observes, there is a crucial difference in the quality of appearing of the past experience. When in memory, I recall a past joy; the "i"

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[317] As memories must have an affective content, they are more similar to acts of empathy than might be first apparent and I am not prejudicing the comparison by taking an example of a memory that is heavily laden with an affective content.

[318] Cleary, I can be wrong about the past reason for my joy, when I now reflect upon it, but that is irrelevant here.

[319] Sawicki, *Body, Text, and Science: The Literacy of Investigative Practices and the Phenomenology of Edith Stein*, p.97.

doing the recalling and the "i" living in the past joy are the same. The past experience has been my own and is given as such. There is continuity between "I" in the past and "I" at present. The essential quality of the quality of appearing in memory is its "mineness." Although I can only experience this mineness if at no time do I confuse or collapse the "I" remembering with the "I" of the past experienced remembered. They must never collapse or "fuse."

In acts of empathy, the empathized experiences registering in my lived-experience have a quality of appearing that is different from the way a memory appears. The "I" empathizing is not the same 'I" as the "I" in grief. There is no continuity between the two "I's." The empathized experience has never been, will never be, and is not even fantasized as being mine. The crucial difference between the two acts, Stein surmises, is that the quality of the appearance of past experiences in the acts of memory is its "mineness," whereas the empathized experience does not register in me as having the quality of "mineness."

Similarly to memory, for Stein, empathy must have a tripartite structure. Furthermore, the second level is crucial for the act of empathy. Without the second stage, or its possibility, empathy as elaborated by Stein is unachievable. The second stage makes possible the two seemingly contradictory elements, the non-primordiality of the content of an emotion presently being had by someone else primordially that nonetheless is given in my stream of lived-experience immediately. While I am living and registering

my friend's grief immediately, this grief is not given to me primordially. "It does not issue live from me."[320] In empathy, when I am "at" the feeling of grief, at this second stage, I know that this feeling is being felt by someone, but the originary feeling is not mine; I do not have it primordially; it is someone else's primordial feeling, even as I "share in" or "feel into" it. This "someone else's" is the quality of the appearing of the experience. As Sawicki writes.

> the impossibility of bringing the empathized experience to originarity [primordiality] must display itself in my reflecting inner perception of it, in order to certify for me that this experience belongs to someone else. Your insistence upon the unique irreplicability of the empathized experience is paradoxically bonded to your insistence—equally adamant— that other's experiences nevertheless do appear immediately within our own stream of live experience. *They are differently the same for the other and for me*.[321]

Empathy is a paradoxically immediate but never primordial experience. For empathy to occur, my relation to the intentional structure of your affection is crucial. Only my relation to your object of affection as yours, Stein's "second step," makes possible an act of empathy. To put into relief the

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[320] OPE 11

[321] Sawicki, *Body, Text, and Science: The Literacy of Investigative Practices and the Phenomenology of Edith Stein*, p.101, emphasis mine. Here the you ("your") in question is Stein herself. Marianne Sawicki decided to address Stein directly with "you." For Sawicki's account of the reasons this choice see pp. 90-91.

different possible relations to an object of affection, let us take four competing possibilities. Of which only the last is an act of empathy.

You walk into the room with a smile on your face, at the same time I experience happiness. There seem to be at least four possibilities.

(i) We could both be affected by the presence of a clown.

(ii) You could be cheering me up.

(iii) Your happiness could be contagious.

(iv) I could be feeling your happiness. Only this is a case of empathy.

In the first possibility, we have the same object of happiness, but my happiness is in no way yours or vice versa—same object, different happiness. An example of this would be an audience's general but individual laughter at a comic sequence in a film, which still remains individual; I could have no experience of the fact that anyone else is laughing. In the second, unlike the first, you are the occasion of my happiness, but it is still in no way your happiness. You could, in fact, be sad but your presence cheering me up. In the third, again, you are the occasion of my happiness and we do share in happiness, but to the extent that we just have pure contagion none of us have any object of happiness, and if you do, I certainly do not experience it. In so far as the laughter is just contagious, the "we" is the subject but there is no

object or perhaps we can say that the laughter itself is the object.[322] Only the fourth possibility is an act of empathy. What makes the act of empathy unique is not that we share in the experience. Simply having the same experience is an instance of contagion. In empathy, what I share in is *your* experience of happiness, that is, you having an object of happiness. The subjects are different, unlike in contagion. If the objects were different we would have two completely unconnected experiences, thus the objects must be the same. But the objects cannot be the same as in the example of the movie theater. What must be given to me is the object as the object of your happiness. I need to share *your* object of happiness *as yours*. We have the same object, but given differently to you and me. If empathy is possible, I must be able to become happy from your object of happiness *as you do*. If I did not share your object of happiness as yours, our happinesses would either be indistinguishable, as in identification or contagion, or it would not be immediately given but deduced as in an analogy. "I am no longer turned to the content [the happiness] but to the object of it [the clown]." Unless this second moment of empathy was at least possible, I could not have empathy at

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[322] The "we" in question is not the result of an overlapping of "I" and "thou," is not the product of two individuals identifying, rather it proceeds any individuation.

all. The memory of an object is implicitly mediated by affection, empathy with your affection is implicitly mediated by its object.[323]

My knowledge of both the precise object of happiness and of the person with whom I am empathizing are matters for empirical psychology. What is important is that in empathy I have an immediate non-primordial experience. The only way I can have such an experience is not to have the same affection as you, which I do not, nor to emote to the same object as you do, which I might not even when I empathize, but rather to share into the *way you* emote to that object, which I *can* share but might not be emoting to. The essential component of such an experience is not the object of your affection per se, but rather the intentionality of your experience towards that object. The intentional structure of your emoting to that object is what I can indubitably share and follow. I have an immediate experience that nonetheless stems from the non-primordial experience of an "I," an I that is not me, but an experience that exhibits the intentionality of another living I.

> I reflect that I have been registering a live experience, an experience in which someone lives and that the i living there is not recognizably identical with my own i. Thus an alien i appears. That much is given immediately. Second, I can go on to discover just who that alien i might be. (But this second step would be a matter for empirical

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[323] Although, as I explain below, it does not depend on me being right about what your object of happiness is.

> investigation, and therefore lies beyond the scope of your eidetic study.)[324]

The immediate but non-primordial experience is what gives me the experience of somebody other than me. When I feel that I do not exhaust the totality of egoic experience because I register (or I am given) experiences that are non-primordial (i.e. the intentionality of the experiences of others) but are nevertheless given to me immediately, I experience the life of another. If the mineness of my experience does not exhaust the totality of the experiences registering in me, then these experiences, while registering with me, are experienced as having been had by someone else. Stein writes:

> This other subject is primordial although I do not experience it as primordial. In 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. Thus, empathy is a kind of act of perceiving act [*Eine Art erfahrender Akte*] *sui generis.*[325]

Or in Sawicki's words

> [In memory] [o]ne I lives *now*, and the other lives at some other *'now.'* But the experience of the alien I [in empathy] presents a special case. My own inner engagement with what someone else is feeling can indeed be simultaneous with his or her act of feeling it. In this case, the temporal barrier to our merging is not there. I and 'i' are in sync, so something besides temporality must be keeping

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[324] Sawicki, *Body, Text, and Science: The Literacy of Investigative Practices and the Phenomenology of Edith Stein,* p.97.

[325] OPE 11

> them separate. That something is indicated in your eidetics: it is the invincible difference between originarity and non-originarity [primordiality and non-primordiality] in the content that is shared.[326]

Stein's contribution to our philosophical understanding of the phenomenon of empathy is to uncover the immediacy of empathy without at any point collapsing the distinction between different subjects.

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[326] Sawicki, *Body, Text, and Science: The Literacy of Investigative Practices and the Phenomenology of Edith Stein*, p.102.

Conclusion

I hope that I have shown that empathy is of central concern for the constitution of subjects and even objects, for the methodology of the human sciences, and for our understanding of how we live in a meaningful world. In this conclusion, I would like to gesture towards how the concept of empathy could, in a future project, be used to ground a richer understanding of ethics, on the one hand, and community, on the other.

Empathy and Ethics

I believe that the concept of empathy can be reinstated as a working concept for an ethics that moves us beyond having to choose between an ethical theory that either involves irreducible otherness or is based on an assimilation into the same. Our analysis of empathy allows us to understand how we relate to the other neither by subsuming her nor stripping her of her identity nor her singularity, but also without her otherness being understood as utterly transcendent. Our analysis of empathy provides us with a way to understand how it is that we share across differences while sharing them *as different*.

Here the emphasis is on *across* and it necessitates that phenomenon of empathy should not be understood a projection that presumes a trajectory from a centered self into another centered self. Rather, our analysis of

empathy suggests that we are first and already inserted into intersubjective structures. Our understanding of how empathy works allows us to short-circuit the question of why I should care about the other because it suggests that we always already do. We are neither facing an utterly transcendent other in the first place, nor prisoners in ourselves. Empathy precedes and shortcuts obligations to others understood in term of ought to. Or in Hatab's words:

> It is important to note here that empathy should not be understood as unidirectional from either side of self and Other; it is developmentally bipolar, *inter*personal rather *intra*personal. It is not simply an 'out to' or and 'into' or even a mere 'with,' but a reciprocal co-presencing that prefigures a significant range of intersubjective processes.[327]

Our phenomenological analysis of empathy suggests that we are always already and at first intersubjectively immersed in the world. Such a thesis conveniently solves the problems many other ethical theories face. Furthermore, the phenomenon of empathy proves the primacy of intersubjectivity—provided one pays close attention to the phenomenon itself. In empathy, the immediate but non primordial givenness of the experience of the other is a proof that our existence is embedded in intersubjective fields.

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[327] Lawrence J. Hatab, *Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), p.146. While Hatab is working from a Heideggerian perspective, the similarities to Stein's perspective are evident.

Thus the ethical import of empathy is also directly given and not deduced. Hatab expresses it this way:

> Since authentic empathetic experiences are immediate and not a matter of projection from inside the self out to the Other, such an immersion in someone's condition has a certain phenomenological self-evidency about it, in that the ethical import is directly given, as opposed to some kind of inference or surmise.[328]

The problem with moral theories that focus on disinterest as a condition of possibility for ethical behavior is that they undercut the very basis for being ethical at all. Empathy, properly understood, provides us with the origins of our ethical sense.

> Cognitive moral theory considers rational disinterest to be a great advantage in guaranteeing universality and in preventing ethics from collapsing into the chaos of emotional forces. But we have seen that the turn to affect may in fact be a turn to the very origins of an ethical sense.[329]

The worry that an ethics that valorizes empathy would leave us at the mercy of "chaotic emotional forces" rests on a misunderstanding of how empathy works. The phenomenon of empathy is bimodal. On the one hand, it allows us to share into the experience of the other, on the other, it allows us to understand their feelings, beliefs, desires, motivations etc., by disclosing the intentional structure subtending their being affected. The first moment of the

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[328] Ibid. p.167

[329] Ibid. p.149

phenomenon has been overemphasized—the emotional sharing into the experience—at the cost of the second moment—the disclosing of motivations. The resistance to using the concept of empathy to theorize ethics is due to the false idea that to empathize in is to completely identify with and hence does not allow for any critical distance. Rather, empathy is precisely what gives me access to sentient causality and motivation of which I can then be critical or not. While is true that using the concept of empathy to understand how we are ethical denies that pure disinterest is possible or even desirable, such an analysis does not consign us to irrationality, unless one assumes that absolute disembodied universal disinterest is the only way to be rational.

The concept of empathy not only gives us an understanding of how we can be ethical as already intersubjective, it not only explains how it is that we can feel ourselves into specific motivations; it will, I believe, give us the means to analyze the way certain specific ethical imperatives, "such as responsibility, obligation, conscience, and guilt" have their hold on us, as Hatab suggests:

> Empathy is not simply a feeling; it is a mode of *disclosure* that generates ethical import. In its atmosphere of affective nearness and its being-toward structure there arises the existential 'draw' of the Other that can be called the prereflective condition for the possibility of, and openness to, important ethical forces such as responsibility, obligation, conscience, and guilt.[330]

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[330] Ibid. p.150

Working out the details as to how a full ethical theory based on the concept of empathy accomplishes the phenomenological grounding of various specific ethical terms is part of my future project but let me give an example of how the phenomenon of empathy can lead to personal growth and thus how an ethics based on the concept of empathy might explain how we learn to be ethical.

The phenomenon of empathy enables us to grow ethically. It allows us to expand our ethical horizons in two ways. First, we can empathize with, say, someone's fear of heights without ourselves being scared of heights.

> In principle, all foreign experience permitting itself to be derived from my own personal structure can be fulfilled, even if this structure has not yet actually unfolded. I can experience value empathetically and discover correlative levels of my person, even though my primordial experience has not yet presented an opportunity for their exposure. He who has never looked a danger in the face himself can still experience in the empathetic representation of another's situation.[331]

Empathy allows us to experience more than we have actually have, so to speak. Our catalogue of fears and joys becomes more expansive. We become fuller human beings.

The first way that empathy expands our horizons is that it teaches us about increasingly varied ways we can emote; the second way that empathy

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[331] OPE 115

can expand our horizons is that it lets us understand better the way we are emoting, allows us to better understand ourselves.

> We also see the significance of knowledge of foreign personality for 'knowledge of self' in what has been said. […] [T]hrough empathy with 'related natures,' i.e., persons of our type, what is 'sleeping' in us is developed. By empathy with different composed personal structures we become clear on what we are not, what we are more or less than others. Thus together with self-knowledge, we also have an important aid to self-evaluation. […] When we empathically run into ranges of value closed to us we become conscious of our own deficiency or disvalue. Every comprehension of different persons can become the basis for an understanding of value. Since in the act of preference or disregard, values often come to givenness that remain unnoticed in themselves, we learn to assess ourselves correctly now and then. We learn to see what we experience ourselves as having more or less value in comparison with others.[332]

By empathizing with people we feel similar to we come to appreciate details about ourselves that we had, perhaps, not fully appreciated before, perhaps we are even able to express sentiments that had not had the chance to be fully actualized previously. Similarly, we can come to experience what we value differently, what we can and cannot value. This gives us a way to evaluate our shortcomings and perhaps our strengths. Surprisingly Stein says that we can even learn things about ourselves "now and then" of which we were not simply ignorant, but rather about which we had previously been

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[332] OPE 116

mistaken. One of the possible ways in which this might happen is via the eyes of the other so to speak.

> It is possible for another to 'judge me more accurately' than I judge myself and give me clarity about myself. For example, he notices that I look around me for approval as I show kindness, while I myself think I am acting our of pure generosity.[333]

I believe that other specific question about our ethical nature can be similarly phenomenologically answered. The concept of empathy not only has implications for how we are ethical, it also provides us with a richer understanding of the relation between individual and community.

Empathy and Community

Stein's model of the person in terms of the shape of an "I" depicts how the physical and the psychical can influence each other. For Stein, generally speaking, the person is made up of four different strata. Influences can pass from strata to strata. Our living body interweaves physical causality and intellectual motivation. This interplay is a passage of influences between the physical the psychical. More radically, Stein argues that the channels by which the physical and psychical influence each other, namely the sentient and the intelligent, can be shared across individuals. In the second part of

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[333] OPE 89

her *Habilitationsschrift,* entitled "Individual and Community,"[334] Stein draws out the ramifications of this sharing across for the interdependence of the individuals, and thus, the relationship between individual and community. Stein defines her goals in the following words:

> The investigation into sentient causality grasped the lone psyche first of all as a microcosm, as a world unto itself. However, our considerations themselves were pressing towards a broadening of this framework. We saw that the 'mechanism' of sentient occurrence isn't self-contained. The lifepower that keeps it in operation undergoes influxes 'from without,' and you've got to trace those influxes to their sources if you wish to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the individual psyche.[335]

Exchanges between different permeable layers of a person and between different individuals are described by Stein in terms of lifepower. Stein defines life power in the following way:

> In the same way, a momentary determination of my ego—its life-status—manifests itself in the life feeling, and in turn such determinations manifest an enduring real property: *lifepower*.[336]

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[334] Stein, "Individual and Community," in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2000).

[335] Ibid. p.129

[336] Stein, "Sentient Causality," p.22. In a footnote to this definition Stein acknowledges certain similarities between her concept of lifepower and Lipp's concept of sensate-power as he develops it in Theodor Lipps, *Leitfaden Der Psychologie*, 2., völlig umgearb. Aufl. ed. (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1906), p.80ff. and p.124ff.

Fluctuations in lifepower indicate that the person with her four levels is a kind of transistor for modulations of power. She registers, channels, and receives it. This power can be used up or replenished in different ways. Nutrition is one example. But we can also gain energy from other people and it is here that Stein connects her lifepower to her assessment that the individual is inserted into the community. In somewhat figurative terms, she describes humans as lifepower energy exchangers. We receive and contribute lifepower to the community. That is, we are radically and constitutively connected through the power circuits of the community. Her thesis bears a striking resemblance to Teresa Brennan's transmission of affects.[337]

> I stress again that I am using the term 'transmission of affects' to capture the process that is social in origin but biological and physical in effect. The origin of transmitted affects is social in that these affects do not only arise within a particular person but also come from without. they come via an interaction with other people and environment. But they have a physiological impact. By the transmission of affect I mean simply that the emotions or affects, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another.[338]

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[337] While there is a growing body of work analyzing Brennan's work, for instance Teresa Brennan et al., *Living Attention: On Teresa Brennan*, *Suny Series in Gender Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), none to my knowledge have analyzed the similarities between her transmission of affect and Stein's lifepower.

[338] Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p.3.

Stein's analysis makes clear that nothing really stops at the border of my individuality. I am not only influenced but also constituted by transpersonal structures, institutions, and spaces. Thus the welfare of all is necessary for the individual welfare. The community influences the levels of energy available to any particular individual. This is a radical claim, as Brennan points out, although in seeming ignorance of Stein's work.[339]

> What is at stake now is how the idea of transmitted affects undermines the dichotomy between the individual and the environment and the related opposition between the biological and the social. That does not mean, I stress again, that there is no distinction between the individual and the environment. That is evidently absurd.[340]

The separation between bodies and minds is an after-product of earlier interconnections in which direct perception of affects take place. Research by Peter Hobson, for example, shows that infants have a

> direct perception of and natural engagement with person-related meanings that are apprehended in the expression and behavior of other persons. It is only gradually, and with considerable input from adults, that they eventually come to conceive of 'bodies' on the one hand, and 'minds' on the other.[341]

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[339] I have not found any reference to Stein in Brennan's admirably annotated works, thus I assume that she did not know of her work.

[340] Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, p.7.

[341] R. Peter Hobson, *Autism and the Development of Mind*, *Essays in Developmental Psychology* (Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1993), p.117.

Our interconnectivity and the transmission of affects that underpins it has been overlooked due to the reigning prejudice in favor of self-contained individuals. As Brennan points out

> The transmission of affects is not understood or studied because of the distance between the concept of transmission and the reigning modes of biological explanation. No one really knows how it happens, which may explain the reluctance to acknowledge its existence. But this reluctance, historically, is only recent. […] As the notion of the individual gained in strength, it was assumed more and more that emotions and energies are naturally contained, going no farther than the skin. But while it is recognized freely that individualism is a historical and cultural product, the idea that affective self-containment is also a production is resisted.[342]

In terms of our energy, we are not self-contained. Individual and environment are intertwined. There is a two-way influence between the social and the biological. The social communicates with the flesh by means of the transmission of energy. There is an ongoing circulation and exchange of energy or "lifepower" and when this circulation is halted and blocked, energy is depleted. This in turn, leads to psychical rigidity and produces suffering. That our environment affects us psychically can be seen through the new proliferation of specific pathologies. Brennan echoes not only Stein but Herder's understanding of the importance of climate, Vischer's realization of the importance of the physical structures around us for our affective life, as

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[342] Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, p.2.

well as Lipps' understanding of the power of group identification. Brennan argues that the distinction between individual and environment is artificial as demonstrated at the level of physical and biological exchange.

> At this level, the energetic affects of others enters the person, and the person's affect, in term, are transmitted to the environment. Here lies the key to which it is that people in groups, crowds, and gatherings can often be 'of one mind.' Moreover, once the physical and organic levels are taken into account, one can begin to appreciate that other environmental factors are at work in the transmission of energy and effects. Visitors to New York City or Delphi testify happily to the energy that comes out of the pavement in the one and the ancient peace of the other.[343]

As Brennan makes clear in the introduction to her work, the difficulty with concepts such as the transmission of affects between individuals and between individuals and their environment is that there is a reluctance to believe that such phenomena exist and that such concepts can be made rigorous. Just as empathy was discredited as mere sentimentality, so these concepts too have been discredited as pseudo-scientific. I hope that my analysis of the different aspects of empathy can be used to dispel this reluctance. First, Stein provides the phenomenological analysis which can show the givenness of such interpersonal transfers. Second, Herder and Vischer provide the framework in which to analyze the influence of our cultural, geographical, and architectural context upon us.

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[343] Ibid. p.8

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