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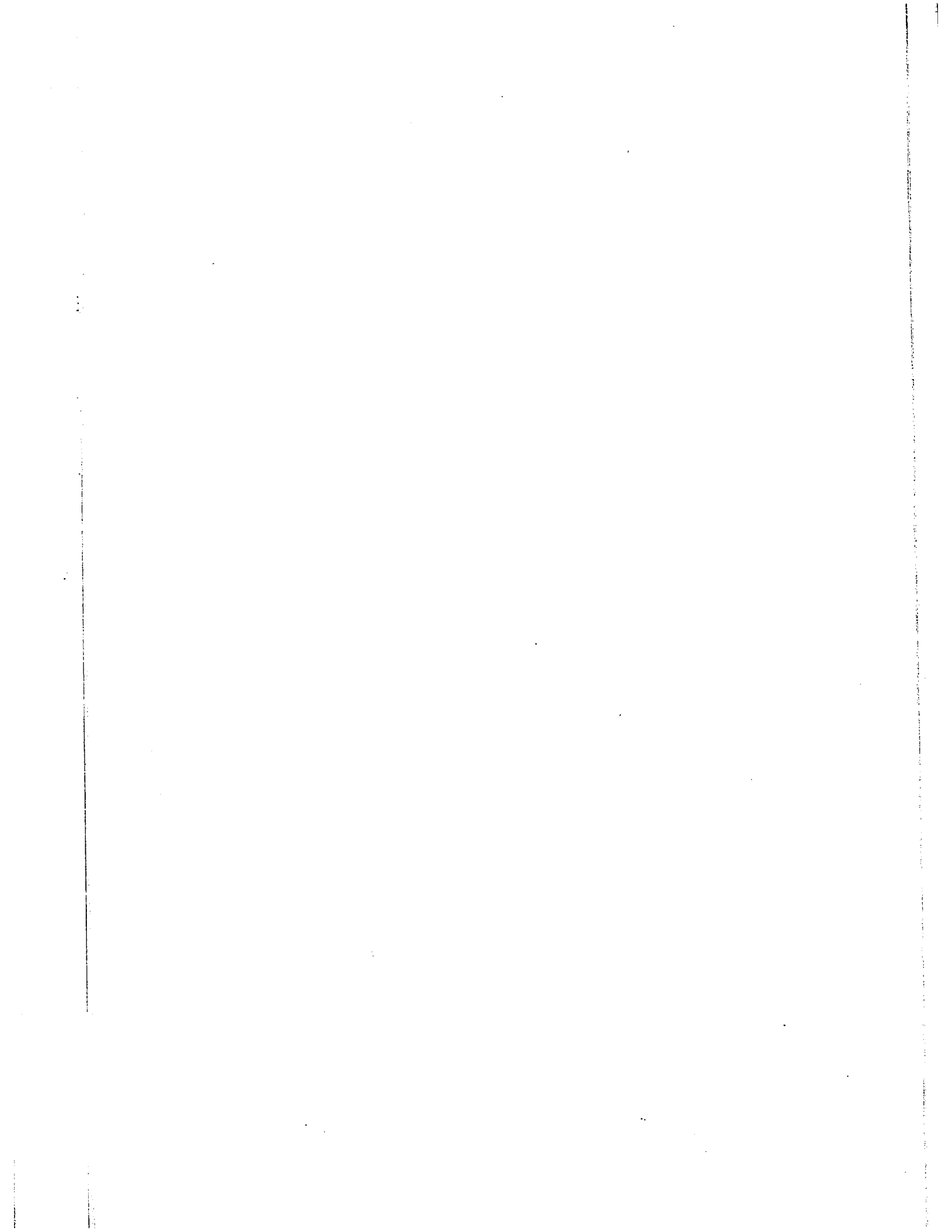
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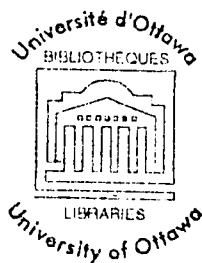


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EMPATHY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Allison Barnes

February 1, 1993



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	
CHAPTER ONE INTERSUBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND THE PROBLEM OF OTHER MINDS	6
CHAPTER TWO THE ETYMOLOGY OF EMPATHY	19
EMPATHY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS	21
EMPATHY AND SELF-PSYCHOLOGY	30
CHAPTER THREE THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF EMPATHY	37
CHAPTER FOUR EMPATHY AND EPISTEMOLOGY	56
PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOANALYTIC ACCOUNTS COMPARED	56
EMPATHY REDESCRIBED	59
GLOSSARY OF DEPTH-PSYCHOLOGY TERMS	75
END NOTES	77
WORKS CITED	82

INTRODUCTION

The chief purpose of this thesis is to establish that empathy is a way of knowing. It is important to advance this claim in order to discredit the view that empathy is simply an emotional response to the situation of others; a response which may presuppose knowledge of others but which is not itself a way of knowing. Since I have located detailed descriptions of empathy primarily in psychoanalytic and phenomenological literature, the thesis will be confined mainly to the problem of empathy as it arises in these disciplines. However, the thesis will ultimately seek to present and describe empathy not only as it occurs in these highly specialized domains, but as it occurs in ordinary social interaction.

Given my intention to argue for the existence of empathic knowledge, it will first be necessary to subdue the philosophical position of scepticism, which holds that the mental states of others are unknowable in principle. If empathy is to be construed as a way of knowing, it is pertinent to question the possibility of intersubjective knowledge in general. In investigating this issue in relation to the problem of Other Minds, we shall see two possible alternatives to scepticism: inference and intuition. Having established the possibility of intersubjective knowledge in general, I shall move on to psychoanalytic and phenomenological accounts of empathy.

In recent decades, the concept of empathy has undergone a

great deal of scrutiny, particularly in phenomenological and psychoanalytic literature. In the field of psychoanalysis, empathy has become increasingly central to traditional psychoanalytic theory and self-psychology. Many psychoanalytic theorists now view empathy as their primary method of psychoanalytic observation and communication. The literature reveals empathy as the distinctive tool which allows the psychoanalyst to gain access to the foreign experience of his patient. Empathy is the skill which supplies the psychoanalyst with the data of another's mental life.

Psychoanalytic treatment of empathy has striking philosophical significance and offers specific descriptions of the complex and elusive empathic process. Still, in all analyses, empathy is a victim of wandering terminology. The notion has been loosely equated with either intuition or inference, while the role of imagination and feeling remains ambiguous.

Beyond providing conceptual illumination, psychoanalytic descriptions of empathy also have epistemological significance. In making sense of the notion of empathy, psychoanalytic theory sometimes underlines empathy as a way of knowing. Success in analysis hinges on the possibility of coming to know a foreign experience. The analyst who claims to know the foreign experience of his schizophrenic patient often attributes this knowledge to a highly developed empathic skill. It is empathy which leads to knowledge of a foreign experience and which

guarantees the success of psychoanalytic communication.

The phenomenological literature surrounding empathy seeks to describe the process as a complex act of consciousness. It attempts to articulate how an individual is acquainted with foreign consciousness through the empathic encounter. While the phenomenology of empathy achieves conceptual clarification, it is confronted with the same difficulties which arise in psychoanalytic study. In both disciplines, there is little consensus as to whether or not empathy is a way of knowing, and if so, as to what characterizes this knowledge. Again, empathic knowledge is sometimes defined as intuition, sometimes as inference.

The claim that we can know the experiences of others is controversial in philosophical inquiry. The problem of knowing another's thoughts or feelings is motivated by the idea that thoughts and feelings are things which are in some sense private, or not directly observable. However, there has been some philosophical resistance to the idea that our experiences are 'inner', hidden in or behind our physical bodies. It is not necessary to fully resolve these metaphysical problems in this work. To describe experiences as 'inner' does not require one to adopt a metaphysical position of dualism, nor does it require one to reject a position of behaviorism. Accepting the 'inner' quality of human experience simply forces one to recognize the existence of experiencing individuals, and to recognize that every experience by nature arises from and belongs to a

particular person. In other words, experiences are seen, thought or felt by a subject. Moreover, an individual may choose not to physically express what he or she sees, thinks or feels. And if an individual experience exists, but is wholly or partially concealed, then it can legitimately be called 'inner' from the standpoint of other subjects. Since these individual experiences are not always directly observable by others, it makes sense to speak of 'inner' mental or affective states. Thus, throughout this work, I shall sometimes refer to 'inner states', meaning simply that these states are attached to an experiencing subject. Indeed, any discussion of empathy rests on the assumption that these individual experiences exist.

Again, since my aim is to demonstrate that empathy is cognitive, the presentation and exploration of the phenomenological and psychoanalytic approaches is appropriate. I cannot, therefore, possibly address all views on the subject of empathy. In general, I will not explain the process of empathy, but will describe instead. (I believe that explanation and description are separate endeavors.) Thus, my treatment of empathy will not aim toward scientific analysis or measurement as is the tendency in psychoanalytic theory. Neither will I study empathy from an evolutionary perspective. As well, I will not consider the hermeneutics of empathy, which investigates the empathic understanding we may gain of other texts, art and cultures. I will ignore empathy as it arises in theories of aesthetics and ethics. In relation to the problem of Other

Minds, I will avoid altogether the epistemological question 'how do I know that others exist?', and its possible solution in terms of empathy. Instead, I shall assume that others do exist, and shall describe how one may gain empathic access to the experiences of these others.

In the following pages, I shall defend the view that empathy is a species of inference by analogy. While analogy is at the basis of an empathic encounter, empathy must be understood not only as an intellectual operation, but also as an affective and imaginative experience. Because empathy is a highly complex process, and because it is confused with other similar acts such as sympathy and emotional contagion, describing empathy is not an easy task, as the literature reveals. Describing the characteristics of the empathic encounter is helpful in determining the limits of empathic knowledge, and is of significance in many domains outside philosophy and outside psychology, including many of the social sciences. From a purely philosophical standpoint however, the epistemology of empathy is worthwhile as a way of establishing the possibility and typical characteristics of intersubjective knowledge in general.

CHAPTER 1

INTERSUBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND THE PROBLEM OF OTHER MINDS

The psychoanalytic and phenomenological literature regarding empathy solicits a philosophical study of the possibility and characteristics of empathic knowledge. Philosophical questions immediately arise: Is it possible to acquire knowledge of another subjective slice of experience? How is it possible? How do our beliefs concerning other people become justified and confirmed? These questions extend beyond the issue of empathy, to the possibility of intersubjective knowledge in general. If empathy is to be construed as an epistemologically defensible way of knowing, it is pertinent to ask how our claims about others may be justified. The issue of justifying knowledge claims about others is treated in the traditional philosophical problem of Other Minds.

The problem of other minds encompasses two separate, yet often confused, lines of inquiry. One line of inquiry explores the problem of justifying our knowledge of the existence of other minds. Here, the question is how one knows that other minds exist; how one knows that another is perceiving or thinking. A separate question refers specifically to our knowledge of other mental states, assuming that other minds actually exist. The problem is to determine how the belief that someone is experiencing anger, for example, may be justified. In this discussion, I will avoid altogether the first question of how one

knows that other minds exist, that is, the problem of escaping solipsism. In questioning our knowledge of other mental states, I am interested in determining the possibility of knowing the content of a foreign slice of experience. This foreign experience may comprise a thought, a feeling, an emotion, or any other mental state.

Many diverse views have been put forth in the endeavor to justify our knowledge claims about others. However, these views refine to just two basic arguments which have been offered in response to the sceptic. Solutions to the problem of other minds employ one of two methods: inference or intuition. In unravelling the sceptic's argument, philosophers follow either a direct or an indirect path.

The sceptic argues that any mental experience is a purely subjective event. Moreover, mental experiences are only contingently related to physical behavior. We know this to be true from ordinary experience: one may feel angry, for example, and choose not to outwardly express the anger. Or one may pretend to feel angry. The sceptic concludes that mental states and physical behavior are neither logically nor causally related. Knowing that another person has a particular mental state implies either that one experiences the mental state directly, or infers the mental state by some reliable method. For the sceptic, both the direct and indirect approaches are futile. No one has the ability to experience another's mental states directly, and there is no method by which one can make correct and reliable knowledge

claims about others. The sceptic concludes that knowledge of foreign mental states cannot be justified. Our knowledge of other minds is inadequate and cannot be compared to our knowledge of other things, such as the physical world.¹

The most traditional and obvious response to the sceptic is the argument from analogy. Proponents of the analogy view claim that they have found a reliable method of inference which justifies beliefs about foreign mental states. To argue by analogy is to infer observed similarities from unobserved similarities. If two items have been found to have many features in common, and one of them has a further feature which is not directly observable in the other, then one is justified in inferring that the second also has that feature. One will observe that there is an association between one's own particular mental state and type of behavior. If one notices that there are other people who exhibit behavior similar to one's own, one is justified in concluding by analogy that their behavior is associated with a corresponding mental state.

Of course, analogical arguments are inductive arguments. They are characterized as being relatively strong or weak, rather than as deductively valid or invalid. Even if it is established that the premises of an analogical argument are all true, the conclusion is only probably true. The premises of an inductive argument give more or less good reasons for its acceptance. That is to say, inductive arguments do not deal with proof, but with probable evidence. The evidence makes the conclusion of the

argument more or less likely.

Again, to draw an analogy between two persons is to indicate ways in which they are similar. The analogy may be motivated by descriptive or literary goals. If one uses analogy to infer some unobserved characteristic of another person, then one is arguing by analogy. The argument is stronger, and the truth of the conclusion more probable, if it can be shown that the premise items have properties in common.

The force of the analogy argument rests on the contention that we all have similar bodies, and our behavior is essentially the same when we are confronted with similar situations. For example, many of us experience fear and exhibit corresponding fear-behavior when confronted with life-threatening situations. Because of these highly significant similarities, it is reasonable to believe that others experience what we experience when they behave as we behave.

Other philosophers have responded to the sceptic by arguing that we have direct access to the experiences of others. One philosopher who formulated this claim was Max Scheler. Scheler argued that expression is apprehended directly. He believed that empiricism wrongly leads us to believe that only primary sense data is given to us immediately. Scheler insists that the child who recognizes the friendliness of his mother's face is incapable of making an inference. The expression is given as directly to the child as are colours and shapes. For Scheler, what we perceive is not bodies or minds but integral,

expressive wholes. Scheler admits limits to this direct knowledge: bodily sensations cannot be directly known, however 'higher spiritual states' such as emotions are grasped directly, and are often shared.²

The direct access response to the sceptic is a form of intuitive knowledge. Intuitive apprehensions occur in the absence of inference, causes or justifications. For example, introspection has often been labelled as a kind of intuition, since it does not make sense to justify a statement such as 'I am angry'. The awareness of the anger is immediate. In introspection, one has direct access to one's own anger, without the use of inference. In the case of introspection, the notion of knowledge by intuition is tenable. As we shall see, intuitive knowledge of the thoughts or feelings of others is far more problematic.

The source of the rift between intuition and inference is this question: are mental and affective states necessarily private? Despite arguments which have been given against the notion of a 'ghost in the machine', it is clear that mental states are necessarily private at least insofar as they cannot be owned by others. It is also clear that mental states seem in some way to be hidden and internal. We may think of all conscious experiences as having both an 'inside' and an 'outside'. It seems obvious that the inside of a particular experience is not transparent to others, and cannot be directly observed by others. The problem therefore is to determine whether

or not any outside is a reliable sign of any inside.

The direct access solution is discredited once we admit that at least part of any individual experience is hidden to others. The truth is that we cannot deny the interior and non-observable character of thoughts and feelings. Even when clearly expressed, the content of another's experience does not directly present itself.

Fortunately, the private aspect of mental states does not imply that intersubjective knowledge is impossible. In other words, the internal character of individual experiences does not entail that these experiences are epistemologically private. Furthermore, it is possible that these experiences may be communicated and even shared. Thus, there is no reason to exclude the possibility of intersubjective inferential knowledge. When one sees another person red-faced with clenched fists, for instance, it is at least possible that one is actually inferring that this person is angry based on one's own acquaintance with feelings of anger. Unfortunately, we have no privileged, telepathic access to foreign experiences. In certain cases, our knowledge of others may appear to be intuitive and instantaneous. Yet, this knowledge may be ultimately acquired by inferring a mental state which remains partially hidden.

If knowing others is a matter of inference, what can be said of the analogy argument? The main deficiency with the analogy view is failure to provide a criterion to determine when correct claims have been made regarding foreign mental states.

This criticism is known as the criteriological objection.³ Philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Malcolm, Strawson and Austin maintain that there is no criterion on the basis of which one can justify claims regarding others. In other words, there is no way to determine that a mistake has been made in attributing particular mental states to other people. For example, analogy does not enable an individual to ascertain when another is just pretending to be angry. Without a suitable criterion by which we can determine the truth of our beliefs concerning others, intersubjective knowledge is merely a matter of opinion.

Presumably, there is no way (either direct or indirect) of checking whether or not my conception of your experience actually coincides with your conception of your experience. When another person says he is in pain, how can one's own conception of her pain be tested? John Wisdom expresses the problem this way:

How can two people attach the same meaning to a statement, when the one can check it in a way in which it is impossible for the other to do so? How can two people be concerned with the same proposition, the same fact, when one can ascertain the truth of that proposition in a certain way, while it makes no sense to talk of the other ascertaining its truth in that way?⁴

Ordinary language philosophers have attempted to supply the missing criterion by which we can justify our intersubjective insights. Strawson argues that one can know that another person is experiencing a particular mental state by determining if he is using words correctly. In order to determine correct word usage,

one must appeal to the public meaning of the words which we use to describe our experiences. Words such as pain and fear have intersubjective, univocal meaning only. Identifying the correct use of these words enables the knower to determine whether or not someone is actually in pain or only pretending to be in pain. In this view, behavior is a logically adequate criterion for determining the correctness of other minds statements.⁵

The ordinary language argument hinges on the belief that words have univocal meaning. If this is true, interpersonal communication and knowledge is possible, and justifiable. It is certainly true that the descriptions which people give of their mental states are similar. The existence of words which refer to our mental states along with the fact that our mental states are communicable, suggests that our claims about others may be sufficiently accurate to demand the status of probable knowledge. Intersubjective cognition becomes possible and justifiable if we acknowledge that human experience has largely the same boundaries, enclosing analogous meaning.

So far it has been argued that foreign mental states may be known through inference, and suggested that the existence of univocal sense terms supply a way of justifying our knowledge of others. Surprisingly, this solution to the other minds problem can be seen as a reformulation of the analogy argument which it was meant to replace. Underlying the analogy argument is the contention that human experience has a fundamental similarity, and that this similarity justifies generalizations about

another's experience. Ordinary language philosophers justify this generalization by locating similarity in the use of words. In this sense, the ordinary language solution may be reconciled with the analogy argument. Both views ground intersubjective knowledge in the analogous.

There is yet another obstacle to the analogy solution. The problem lies in justifying knowledge of an experience which is completely foreign. In this predicament, our knowledge cannot be justified by generalizations based on similar language use and other behavioral clues. At first sight, the process of analogy is not equipped to explain the knowledge we may acquire of thoughts or feelings which the individual knower has never before experienced. If our knowledge of the inner states of another were strictly dependent upon analogies which the individual can find in his own experience, then it is hard to see how he could discover foreign mental states which have never been realized in his own subjective existence. The difficulty of inferring by analogy increases as the disparity between experience increases.

It is entirely plausible, however, that intersubjective disparities can be overcome to a large degree, while retaining a modified version of analogical inference. In the case of apprehending foreign experiences, knowledge of others implies the ability to get out of oneself and become as if another. This ability is essentially an imaginative act, an imaginative transposal. The imagination is able to alter and modify individual experiences in such a way that they may become like

those of another. The imagination saves us from the predicament of disparity by extending our experiences in light of what we already know of another perspective. In this way, one's own experiences become an analogue of other foreign experience. It is this sort of imaginative analogy which enables the analyst to grasp the foreign world of his schizophrenic patient. When the schizophrenic describes his experience, the analyst gains knowledge by imaginatively altering his own similar feelings such as confusion and isolation. In knowing foreign experiences, use of analogy remains indispensable.⁶

Imaginative analogy has limits. These limits are determined by the ability of the imagination to locate similarity through extension and modification. However, many foreign experiences simply cannot be known, even by the most flexible imagination. An accurate grasping of another experience is also limited by the knower's scope of accumulated life experience. Although knowledge claims of foreign mental states are more difficult to justify through the use of imaginative analogy, we should not underestimate our power to make accurate generalizations about others by synthesizing and extending relevant individual experience.

What are the conditions of making accurate generalizations? Obviously, another person must express herself in order for her foreign experience to be apprehended. This suggests a fundamental correlation between what people say and do, and their conscious states. The expression may be verbal or

non-verbal and may include facial expression or bodily posture, as well as gesture. What someone says or does counts as evidence for the fact that he is thinking, perceiving or feeling something. The status of this evidence is indirect, as with other sorts of evidence. (All historical knowledge, for example, is gained indirectly through vicarious evidence.) In the case of intersubjective knowledge, all that is required is that the evidence be reliable.

In addition, the individual who takes a cognitive interest in a foreign experience must acquire contextual background information. In order to know something of a foreign emotion, for example, it is necessary to have some facts concerning its origin. In knowing another's grief, I must ascertain as much as possible the circumstances surrounding the occurrence of this grief. This entails knowing something of the concrete situation, as well as relevant information about the other's biography. Although it is never complete, this background information fixes the accuracy of cognitive generalizations.

It is absurd to hold that knowing another's experience is possible only if the individual has had an identical experience. Certainly, my own exposure to the emotion of grief will increase my chances of accurately understanding another's grief. However, it is unreasonable in the intersubjective realm and elsewhere, to demand a strict criterion of identity. This would be equivalent to maintaining that one must be a chair in order to understand a

chair. Even though one to one correspondence between individual experience is impossible, absolute sameness is an unnecessary criterion of justification.

Interpersonal cognition requires an epistemology which is unrelated to the study of the perceptual knowledge of physical objects. Our treatment of intersubjective knowledge has been inadequate in philosophy when we have considered knowing others as knowing objects. Our conception of knowing other minds has been treated as a special case of knowing objects and has therefore demanded corresponding empirical, theoretical and methodological conditions of justification.

As many philosophers have maintained, there is a point at which doubt comes to an end; at which to doubt is absurd. Can one doubt that a screaming man feels pain? Does this need to be proven? Evidently, we do come to know the mental states of others and that our knowledge is often right. One has only to think of how often we make accurate predictions in social interaction. Generalizations are, like any others, corrected and adjusted in light of further relevant experience until we find ourselves able to imaginatively reconstruct the inner states of another mind under given conditions. Knowing other minds originates in experiences which have univocal meaning and which can therefore be extended to others under certain conditions.

Given that intersubjective knowledge is possible and may be justified, we may now begin to study the notion of empathy. Important questions to answer will be: What is empathy? Is

empathy a way of knowing? What sort of knowledge is empathic knowledge? These questions have occupied psychoanalytic theorists in recent decades in a renewed attempt to properly define their methods of interpersonal cognition. My analysis of empathy will therefore begin by recovering the psychoanalytic debate.

CHAPTER 2

The Etymology of Empathy

While the concept of sympathy has a long history, the term empathy is relatively recent. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Rudolph Lotz and Wilhelm Wundt used the German term 'Einfuhlung' in an aesthetic doctrine, which was explained more fully by Theodore Lipps and also extended to signify an intersubjective process. E.G. Tichener, a student of Wundt, coined the English translation 'empathy' in 1910. Its German synonyms, 'sich hineinversetzen' (to put oneself in another place) and 'Fremdwahrnehmung' (to come to know the other or the stranger) clearly refer to the ability of one person to know the experience of another.¹

Long after its translation, empathy was not properly distinguished from the concept of sympathy.² The German Einfuhlung has a distinctive meaning of 'feeling into' something. However, Einfuhlung was often translated incorrectly as 'feeling with', which is the usual meaning of sympathy. In the Greek derivation of empathy, the prefix em- means 'in' or 'within', while the prefix sym- as in sympathy means 'with', 'along with' or 'together'.³ Etymologically, the verb 'to sympathize' means to share or participate in another's experience. When one sympathizes with another's feeling of grief, for example, one feels with, or shares that grief. In contrast, Einfuhlung is a much broader concept than the term sympathy. It signifies the

ability to find one's way into the experience of another, without necessarily participating in that experience. Because of the subtle difference between feeling with and feeling into, empathy sometimes is used to indicate the understanding of another person's experience through a process of sharing. This definition is etymologically inaccurate. There is an important distinction between being sympathetic and being empathic.

Evidently, empathy and sympathy are qualitatively different experiences. Empathy does not always lead to the experience of sympathy. However, sympathetic feelings are always preceded by an empathic process. In other words, feeling into is a necessary condition of feeling with. For example, empathizing with my unemployed neighbour does not necessarily entail sharing his financial stress. Empathizing with my unemployed neighbour means that I apprehend his financial stress in a particular way. This empathic apprehension precedes any further feeling of sympathy.

Beyond the readily accepted distinction between empathy and sympathy, descriptions of empathic acts diverge. This is particularly true in the field of psychoanalysis, where theorists seek to articulate the process of empathy in a detailed manner. The effort to describe empathic knowledge has become increasingly central to psychoanalytic theory. Clearly, the apprehension of a patient's experience is crucial to successful analysis and treatment. Thus, one finds in psychoanalytic literature the most ardent exploration of empathy conceived specifically as a way of

knowing. In this chapter, I will recover the most constructive analyses of empathy; analyses which I take to be representative of the main positions in the psychoanalytic debate.

My retrieval of the psychoanalytic debate will provide insight into the cognitive function of empathic encounters not only in the psychoanalytic domain, but also in ordinary human interaction. Although psychoanalysis is a project which has specific and controversial goals, it is essentially an enterprise which is based on an interpersonal dyad in which the therapist seeks to understand the foreign experiences of his patient. For this reason, psychoanalytic literature is highly suggestive in the field of empathic knowledge.

Empathy and Psychoanalysis

The psychoanalytic debate surrounding empathy was initiated by Sigmund Freud who wrote that empathy is the process 'which plays the largest part in our understanding of what is inherently foreign to our ego in other people.'⁴ In this statement, Freud clearly emphasizes the indispensability of empathy and its primacy for our apprehension of other people. However, Freud did not consider empathy to be an integral part of the scientific method he formulated for psychoanalysis. Perhaps he considered the concept of empathy impossible to reconcile with scientific principles and with the emancipation of psychology from philosophy. In any case, the role of empathy in psychoanalysis is a recent debate, fostered especially by those analysts who dare

to stray from classical Freudian theory. There is now a great deal of literature and widespread debate on the subject of empathy and its role in psychoanalytic communication.

Making sense of the process of empathy is motivated by more than academic interest in the field of psychoanalysis. If empathy is recognized to be essential to the method of clinical analysis, then progress in this field hinges on understanding what empathy is all about. For an analyst to act empathically and successfully foster an empathic process in psychoanalytic work, he must be able to conceptualize and elucidate his method. Divergent descriptions of empathy worry the psychoanalyst who wants to preserve the technical status of his work. One analyst writes,

Is empathy a form of projection or a mode of observation? Is it imitative or creative? Is empathy to be equated with intuition or are these two different processes?...Is empathy an end result, a tool, a skill, a kind of communication, a listening stance, a type of introspection, a capacity, a power, a form of perception or observation, a disposition, an activity or a feeling? Is empathy to be equated with love, understanding, sympathy? These varied and seemingly mutually contradictory positions all put forth and ably defended in the literature confuse the reader who seeks a unitary explanation for the experience he has been calling empathy.⁵

Recent psychoanalytic conceptions of empathy attempt to capture the stages of the process in a systematic fashion. Those who consider empathy to be essential to the method of psychoanalysis consistently argue that empathy is a way of knowing. There is a great deal of confusion, however, as to how

empathic knowledge is actually acquired. This is the main issue: is empathy a species of intuition or inference? This problem occupies theorists of two major conceptual and exemplary positions in the psychoanalytic debate.

The first psychoanalytic position concerning empathic knowledge is asserted in a joint work by Beres and Arlow entitled *Fantasy and Identification in Empathy*.⁶ In this work, Beres and Arlow maintain that empathic knowledge is acquired through a process of identification. This relation between empathy and identification extends back to Theodore Lipps, who believed that one experiences empathy by projecting emotional states onto a work of art. In confronting a work of art, Lipps argued that one involuntarily projects oneself into the object and establishes an identification between it and oneself. In this manner, one comes to understand and appreciate the object.⁷ In psychoanalytic theory, identification signifies something slightly different: it is an automatic unconscious mental process whereby an individual becomes like another person in one or several aspects.⁸ Thus the analyst is meant to empathize with the patient by unconsciously merging with the patient's mental state.

How exactly does the therapist unconsciously merge with the patient? Beres and Arlow argue that identification takes place through the medium of fantasy. During analysis, the patient's fantasies stimulate the therapist's own during communication, resulting in a shared unconscious wish. According to Beres and Arlow, these unconscious fantasies are transmitted

in much the same way as a poet transmits meaning and emotion to his audience. The poet and the audience respond to similar unconscious fantasies, primarily infantile fantasies, which are communicable. Key devices such as repetition, symbolism and metaphor allow these fantasies to be transmitted and shared, securing empathic communication.⁹ Repetition, symbolism and metaphor convey meaning which is fundamental to all human experience. Beres and Arlow claim that the '...universally shared early biological experiences of mankind form the basis of universal fantasies, facilitating empathic communication between person and person, and person and groups.'¹⁰

Beres and Arlow clearly state that identification is only a temporary stage in the empathic process. In other words, when the therapist shares unconscious fantasies through identification, there exists only a temporary sense of 'oneness' with the patient. The psychoanalyst identifies with the patient for a short period of time, followed by a longer period of distance during which cognitive analysis takes place. In this second phase of separateness, the empathizer thinks and feels about the patient rather than with him.¹¹ Empathy, then, is a process which occurs in two stages. According to Beres and Arlow, 'there are two distinguishing features to empathy: one, it is a transient identification; second, the empathizer preserves his separateness from the object.'¹²

Beres and Arlow also maintain that successful empathic communication resides in the ability to 'separate self from

non-self'. The separation of self from the other is a skill which is developed throughout one's life. This is why infants cannot successfully empathize, and why a normal individual continues to improve in empathic attunement.

For Beres and Arlow, the end result of empathy is knowledge by intuition. In other words, empathy is an experience which gives the therapist intuitive knowledge of his patient. The intuitive understanding of the therapist follows from his empathic response. Apparently, this intuitive interpretation is confirmed when the therapist's associations 'correspond' to the patient's. Beres and Arlow also claim that the psychoanalyst's intuitive knowledge is subject to disciplined validation. (Unfortunately, they do not outline this process of validation in detail.)

In summary, Beres and Earlobes position is representative of many which occur in the psychoanalytic debate surrounding empathy. Their thesis is that empathy involves an experience of merging or oneness, followed by an experience of distance and interpretation. Empathic knowledge is ultimately a matter of intuition, demonstrated when two people have parallel or similar experiences. For Beres and Arlow, empathy is successful when the therapist and the patient come to share an unconscious fantasy or infantile desire.

The description of empathy as trial identification has a number of shortcomings. Basch is one prominent author who notes that trial identification is a contradiction in terms, given its

accepted definition in psychoanalytic theory. Identification normally implies the modification of one's character in the interest of becoming like another in some significant respect. In the case of empathy, however, the therapist has no wish to become like his patient. The identification which Beres and Arlow describe is actually a matter of merging with what the patient is experiencing, rather than with the other person per se.¹³

There is a more serious difficulty with the notion of empathy as transference identification. Properly speaking, empathy is not a matter of merging or identifying at all. That is to say, the empathizer does not actually 'lose himself' in another experience. Nor does the empathizer merge in an experience of oneness. The process of identification is actually intrinsic to the act of sympathy, in which an experience becomes shared. Feeling one's way into the experience of another does not involve immersion to the extent that the other's feelings or fantasies become contagious.

Beres and Arlow fail to explain the relation between identification and feeling, or affect. Their description suggests that empathic identification, or the merging of fantasy, is essentially an intellectual intuition rather than an act of feeling. Yet it is feeling which makes empathy a unique mode of intersubjective knowledge. It is feeling which distinguishes empathy from other kinds of interpersonal knowledge and communication. This distinction is supported by the etymological sense of the term which depicts empathy as a process of feeling

into another experience. Any description of an empathic encounter must account for its affective core.

Beres and Arlow's view is not plausible given their use of the term identification. Nevertheless, I think that there is a sense in which identification, in its weakest sense, underlies an empathic encounter. Recall that empathy, in metaphorical terms, means 'to step into another's shoes'. Now, in order to step into another's shoes we must identify with another human being as far as we try to grasp another experience, from another perspective. This identification, however, does not entail an experience of oneness or mergence. To place ourselves in the other's shoes, into what he or she is feeling, is not the same process as considering what we would feel if we were in those shoes. To grasp another experience empathically means to apprehend a foreign experience in a particular way. To empathize means to know another mental state as the other experiences it; not as the empathizer would in the same situation.

Beres and Arlow suggest that empathy is a process which is unconscious and intuitive. Their analysis focuses on the cognitive function of empathy in describing how another's experience is communicated or transmitted, or in other words, how empathic knowledge is acquired. Like Beres and Arlow, many psychoanalytic theorists argue that empathic knowledge is acquired entirely unconsciously.¹⁴ They are therefore forced to acknowledge that the process is ultimately a matter of intuition. This conception of empathy as intuition is challenged by another

position in the psychoanalytic debate which is best expressed by Buie in his article *Empathy: its Nature and Limitations*.¹⁵

Buie contends that empathy is a species of inference. When we want to know the inner state of another person, says Buie, we observe the person's behavior which is a cue to that state. Inferring another's mental state involves searching our memory for similar cognitive or affective configurations that are associated with similar behavior. When we find such correspondence, we draw an inference that our own configuration or 'internal referent' is qualitatively the same as the inner experience of the other person.¹⁶

According to Buie, there are four classes of internal referents. In other words, there are four ways to empathize, through the process of inference. Conceptual referents, including self and object representations, emphasize a cognitive understanding of the patient. Self-experience referents are low-intensity memories of one's own experience that carry some degree of the felt aspects of the original experience. These memories form the basis of empathic inference. In addition, imaginative imitation empathy suffices when there is no self-experience. A model of the patient's mental state is imagined, again using behavioral clues. Finally, resonance referents are built through clearly expressed mental states which stimulate a similar affect in the observer.¹⁷ Resonant referents are created through emotional contagion. Buie warns us that in ordinary social interaction we witness a blend of these various

empathic types.

According to Buie's account, empathy is open to error just as inference is. Our knowledge of others becomes inaccurate when the patient distorts or withholds behavioral clues. The internal referents which the therapist draws upon to infer are certainly never perfect, although they can be developed and improved. Although the inferential process is inherently uncertain, it correctly depicts the nature of empathic knowledge.¹⁸

Buie rejects the idea that empathy is 'a unique mode for directly gaining information about the patient by means that are independent of visual and auditory perceptions of his behavior.'¹⁹ He clearly states that empathy is a process which occurs after communication has taken place. It is not itself a kind of communication or mode of perception. Buie is responding to those psychoanalytic theorists who conceive empathy as a separate capacity or mode of observation.²⁰ For Buie, the predominantly verbal expression that takes place during analysis leads to the therapist's empathic inference.

Buie's equation of empathy and inference is, I think, more credible than the intuition view presented by Beres and Arlow. The claim that our apprehension of another's experience is ultimately based on behavioral evidence rather than immediate unconscious mental coincidence is supported by ordinary experience. When we expect someone to empathize with our feeling of grief, for example, we ensure the success of the empathic

encounter by giving plenty of verbal and non-verbal clues. We do not expect that the accuracy of the empathic act will be determined by a process of unconscious merging. When we think that someone has successfully grasped our experience through empathy, we mean that they have correctly inferred the content of our experience.

Still, Buie's analysis is deficient because it *reduces* empathy to inference. Although it is based on inference, empathy is a way of knowing which is not reducible to inference. Again, what seems to be missing in Buie's account is an understanding of how feeling functions in empathic knowledge. Empathic knowing is a particular way of knowing, with unique features and characteristics. Buie does not consider how empathic knowledge is distinct from other kinds of intersubjective knowledge.

The conception of empathy as a species of inference is further developed by Heinz Kohut. His analysis of empathic knowledge supplies at least some of the missing material which we see in the psychoanalytic debate. His work on empathy has been the most influential in the field of psychoanalysis but has not yet been provided with philosophical depth.

Empathy and Self-Psychology

Heinz Kohut's self-psychology emerged in 1959. Kohut was trained in classical tradition of psychoanalysis and was well-known as a conservative Freudian theorist. Self-psychology

marked a shift in traditional theory which Kohut insisted was a development and further extension of traditional psychoanalysis. Kohut's new approach was fostered by his work on pathological narcissism as well as by constant complaints from his patients that they were not being understood.

Self-psychology is an approach which focuses on the self, which is considered to be the center of individual experience and development. Kohut noticed that Freudian psychoanalysis overlooks the importance of the self and that most psychoanalytic theories are inadequate because they see the self only as a content of the mind.

The key concept in self-psychology is the selfobject concept, introduced by Kohut in 1971. This concept separates self-psychology from classical psychoanalysis. Selfobjects are other people who are viewed as extensions of ourselves. In other words, the term selfobject represents one's experience of another as part of the self.²¹ That is to say, the selfobject has a mirroring function. When there is a lack of differentiation between the self and the other, the other is actually functioning as a selfobject. Kohut insists that we need selfobjects throughout our lives to ensure the development of a mature, cohesive self. Furthermore, the self cannot 'survive' in the absence of stable selfobjects. When there is a lack of selfobjects, the self experiences fragmentation and self-esteem problems. Analysts who endorse self-psychology view their role as that of providing the patient with a secure selfobject.

The selfobject concept forces Kohut to reformulate the classic psychoanalytic notion of transference. In its classical sense, transference is the patient's projection of infantile drives onto the analyst who represents a figure or object from the past. Self-psychology rejects the idea that the analyst represents an object from the past. Instead, the analyst is experienced as a continuation of the self, an undistinguished psychic entity.²²

Kohut argued for the centrality of empathy in psychoanalytic work beginning in his 1959 essay, 'Introspection, Empathy, and Psychoanalysis: An Examination of the Relationship between Mode of Observation and Theory'.²³ He clearly states that empathy is the major tool of psychoanalysis. He consistently emphasizes that only through empathy can one come to an in-depth understanding of the inner life of another person. Being the science of complex mental states, psychoanalysis presupposes the phenomenon of empathy because 'empathy is not just a useful way by which we have access to the inner life of man- the idea itself of an inner life of man...is unthinkable without our ability to know via vicarious introspection what the inner life of man is.'²⁴

Kohut defines empathy as vicarious introspection. In vicarious introspection one does not actually introspect the feelings, thoughts or experiences of the other. Rather, one introspects a vicarious feeling aroused in oneself which is motivated by the other's expression of feeling. The vicarious

feeling occurs as the empathizer draws on her own experiences which are judged to be similar to the other's experiences. The accuracy of the vicarious feeling is a function of being receptive to another's self expression. In Kohut's picture of empathy, it is the empathizer and not the other who is the object of introspection.²⁵

Kohut's comparison of introspection and extrospection explicates further his defense of empathic knowledge. He notes that progress in the physical sciences depends on an alternation between observation (extrospection) and theory. Psychoanalysis is a different sort of science which also depends on a mix of observation (introspection) and theory. The point is that extrospection and vicarious introspection have the same epistemic status: they are methods of observation which lead to probable knowledge of a certain phenomenon. As the science of complex mental states, psychoanalysis is based on knowledge attained through vicarious introspection. Empathy, then, is conceived by Kohut as a mode of observation or data gathering which allows psychoanalysis to make progress through its increasingly disciplined use.²⁶

But why should we trust the accuracy of our power to vicariously introspect? Kohut answers this question by arguing that we can understand the experiences of others based on vicarious introspection because they are given in pictures that we have all acquired about humanity. He tells us that

when our analysands tell us about
their inner life, they describe to us

a country to which we have never been, a country to which we can never gain direct access. Still, we are, in principle, able to understand their reports via vicarious introspection (empathy) because they are given to us in the terms of the storehouse of the images and memories that we have acquired through our lifelong previous acquaintance with the inner world of man through our own introspection.²⁷

Evidently, empathy is conceived by Kohut as a way of knowing that stems from basic similarity in the structure and content of human experience. And this similarity is extended even to the psychopathic or abnormal psyche. The similarity gives us access to the basic elements of a foreign experience. Like extrospective observation, empathy is a cognitive tool which is used nonintuitively, ploddingly, by trial and error.

In later work, Kohut emphasizes that empathy is a means of data gathering which involves a second phase of mental activity, in which inferential and other processes are more prominent. In this phase, conclusions drawn from examining another's mental state via empathy are subject to further tests and revisions. This stage is as necessary as in extrospective observation. Like extrospection, vicarious introspection is open to error. And just as certain knowledge is unattainable in our knowledge of the external world of physical objects, so is it unattainable in our grasping of foreign mental acts. It is in the scrutiny of our vicarious feelings that empathic encounters become successful.

Kohut was not trying to introduce a new formulation of

empathy into the framework of psychoanalysis; rather, he was attempting to return it to its original place of prominence. The introspective mode of data gathering, he insisted, must be 'experience-near', rather than 'experience-distance'. This means that the analyst attempts to experience as closely as possible what the patient is experiencing. In the clinical setting, the analyst's own focus remains consistently upon what the patient is experiencing. Kohut refers to this attunement as prolonged immersion or as long-term empathic immersion in the psychological field.

Kohut's analysis of empathy uncovers several important features: empathy is a process which is indirect. It is based on a process of inference. It involves introspection, whereby the empathizer examines his own feelings as a way of knowing those of the other. Again, the process is one of trial and error. The successful empathizer will arrive at an experience near knowledge of a foreign experience.

According to Kohut, this is a way of knowing which differs from other kinds of knowledge, but which remains indispensable in the intersubjective realm. Before self-psychology, analysts would approach the mental life of their patient as if it were a machine. The empathic-introspective stance enables psychoanalysts to bring their hypotheses closer to the patient's own experience.

Kohut's view of empathy as vicarious introspection is credible. His account of the epistemology of empathy is

tantamount to the theory of inference by analogy theory, discussed in the first chapter. There it was argued that this theory accurately depicts the real nature of intersubjective knowledge. Unfortunately, as in all psychoanalytic literature, Kohut's philosophical thoughts are restricted by psychoanalytic discourse. Throughout the following chapter, we will find the same epistemological controversy between intuition and inference in considering the phenomenology of empathy.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF EMPATHY

The phenomenology of empathy is meant to precede all other analyses of the empathic encounter, including psychological analyses. The phenomenology of empathy is envisioned as a source of validity, and as a starting point, for all other accounts of empathic acts. Phenomenology is a distinct enterprise because it seeks to describe rather than explain acts of consciousness. Thus, phenomenology does not attempt to explain the empathic encounter using a series of hypotheses, but instead undertakes the pure description of empathy as an act of consciousness. Pure description is achieved by the phenomenologist who successfully 'brackets' or suspends all beliefs concerning the existence of the world. What remains after this bracketing is the vast realm of one's conscious acts or experiences, now describable in a way that does not assume the world's existence. In addition, the 'transcendental' Ego or the 'I' remains to reflect upon and describe the experiences of pure consciousness.¹

Thus, the phenomenology of empathy proceeds after the suspension of the existence of empathy, and arrives at a pure description of empathy as an act of consciousness. Because the existence of empathy has been suspended, the phenomenological approach is not primarily concerned with the epistemological question which asks how empathic knowledge is acquired. Instead, the phenomenological approach displays the phenomenon of others

and their experiences from the standpoint of the transcendental consciousness. In other words, the phenomenology of empathy examines the empathic encounter not in terms of knowledge acquisition, but in terms of other-awareness. The phenomenological problem is not to discern how one knows another's experience, but to seek an articulation of the structure or content of those experiences in which we are empathically acquainted with others. In this chapter, I shall present and evaluate three phenomenological accounts of empathy. From this evaluation I shall highlight the valuable aspects of the phenomenology of empathy.

Edith Stein has presented the most complete account of the structure of an empathic encounter in her work, *On the Problem of Empathy*.² Stein, a student of Husserl's, presented this work as a doctoral dissertation in 1917. In the opening pages of her work, she emphasizes that her interest in empathy is not epistemological, but specifically phenomenological. Throughout her treatment of the act of empathy, the main concern is '...not how I arrive at this awareness, but what it itself is.'³

In attempting to articulate the essence of empathy, Stein finds it methodologically useful to develop the notion of a psycho-physical individual. The psycho-physical individual is simply the union of soul and body, or in other words, the fusion of consciousness and the physical body. Stein notes that sensations are simultaneously constituents of consciousness, and

spatially localized in the physical body. These sensations are therefore seen by Stein as the link between the pure 'I' and the empirical 'I'. But Stein does not resolve the difficult problem of how these two I's are able to fuse. Fortunately, it is easily possible to separate her description of empathy from this problematic notion of the psycho-physical individual. I shall therefore confine my discussion of Stein specifically to her phenomenological account of the empathic act.

Stein defines empathy simply as the givenness of foreign subjects and their experiences. Her work furnishes this general definition and describes how foreign experiences are given to consciousness through the act of empathy. On Stein's analysis, empathy is a kind of experiencing act which is *sui generis*.⁴ Moreover, empathy is a distinctive species of intuition or direct experience. Stein describes this unique species of intuition through her distinction between primordial and non-primordial experiencing.

According to Stein, primordial experiences include all of our own present experiences. The outer perception of a particular object or the intuitive grasping of a geometric axiom are examples of a primordial experience. Primordial experiences are given directly to us because the object is present here and now. Stein also gives reflective experiences the character of primordially.⁵

Non-primordial experiences, Stein maintains, are represented or reproduced versions of an original, primordial

experience. In addition, certain experiences, such as empathy, may be primordially given, but remain non-primordial in content. Empathy is primordial as a present experience, yet non-primordial because it has a reproduced content. Stein elucidates this point by comparing empathic acts with other acts of consciousness.

Memory is a species of non-primordial or reproductive intuition because the events we remember are reproduced, past experiences. Memory reproduces the structure of our prior experience so that when we remember an old friend, for example, we are not actually seeing him, but it is as if we were seeing him. In memory, we transfer ourselves back into our place as subject of the experience of seeing a friend. Our experience of remembering is primordial, while the content of the experience is reproduced and therefore non-primordial.⁶ This mix of primordially and non-primordially is also present in experiences of fantasy and expectation. In fantasy, says Stein, we transfer ourselves into an imagined experience which is non-primordial in content. Expectation involves the transfer to an imagined place and time in the future.

Similarly, in empathy we transfer ourselves to another person's place. According to Stein, the empathizer experiences himself as the subject of a foreign experience, in the original subject's place. This occurs as the empathizer is 'pulled into' another's primordial, original experience. For example, we may see the sorrow in a friend's face while being led into her experience. As we empathize with her sorrow, it is as if we were

feeling her sorrow, only our feeling is non-primordial.⁷

According to Stein, we do not arrive at the phenomenon of her sorrow, but at our own experience of sorrow that is a reproduction or representation of the original. Our empathy reproduces the structure of this foreign experience. Stein says that '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.'⁸ The successful reproduction of another's feelings, thoughts or experiences is achieved through a unique kind of intuition.

Stein conceives empathy as a process whereby one retains two or more perspectives or standpoints simultaneously. Of course, one perspective is primordial, while the other remains non-primordial. Empathy, says Stein, enables one to escape the boundaries of individuality. The result of an empathic act is the awareness of a multiplicity of transcendental egos, which in turn becomes the condition of possible knowledge of the existing outer world. Empathy, therefore, is not only the basis of intersubjective experience, but also the basis of the constitution of the real, outer world- a world which is not just appearance, but independently existing for everyone.⁹ (The constitution of a transcendental 'We' through empathy, or analogical apperception, was also Husserl's solution to the problem of solipsism in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*.¹⁰)

Stein's phenomenology of empathy continues with a

description of how another's experience is initially given to consciousness. It is another's 'living body' (Leib) which presents the foreign experience to the empathizing consciousness. Every foreign living body, says Stein, conveys 'psychic life'. Furthermore, the psychic is co-perceived with the bodily expression so that '...I see shame in blushing, irritation in the furrowed brow, anger in the clenched fist....'¹¹ Together, the expression and the outward behavior form a natural unity. In the case of empathizing with another's sensation of pain, Stein writes that 'the pain is not a thing and 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.'¹²

Again, the other's body is seen as a living body. In Husserlian fashion, Stein describes the grasping of another's psychic life using spatial metaphor. In outer perception, she notes, the averted and interior sides of a spatial thing are co-given with its seen sides. For example, one grasps all the dimensions of a table or chair, even though some of its sides are not visible. In effect, the whole thing is 'seen' even though parts of the object are hidden. Similarly, empathic representation fulfils the averted sides of the foreign experience which is displayed by another living body.

Obviously, Stein's description of empathy as reproductive intuition confronts the widely accepted theory of inference by analogy. (The theory of inference by analogy holds that empathy

is a matter of inferring the unobserved mental states or experiences of another based on behavioral or expressive similarity.) Stein specifically condemns the theory of inference by analogy for dismissing our *direct* experience of foreign consciousness. She writes: 'This theory maintains that we see nothing around us but physical soulless and lifeless bodies, though I do not see how its advocates could actually hold such a belief.' Stein also refers to the theory as 'an odium of complete absurdity.'¹³ She claims that the theory wishes to account for the possibility of intersubjective knowledge, while neglecting the real nature of intersubjective knowledge.

In spite of the givenness of the foreign consciousness which is displayed by the other, Stein admits that there are limits to empathy. The limits, she says, are determined by the experiential structure of the empathizer. Recall that according to Stein, the success of an empathic encounter hinges on the ability of the empathizer to reproduce her own version of another's experience. But this reproduction can occur only if the empathizer has had a similar experience in the past, rendering the reproduced, non-primordial experience concurrent with the original. At the very least, says Stein, the two experiential structures must not conflict.

How much of his experiential structure
I can bring to my fulfilling intuition
depends on my own structure. In prin-
ciple, 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....By contrast, I cannot fulfil what conflicts with my own experiential structure.¹⁴

Stein also concedes that deceptions may occur in our empathic encounters. We may come to false conclusions if we quickly take our individual characteristic as typical. Similar mistakes occur when we infer by analogy. However, says Stein, it is only through further empathic acts that our mistake may be located and corrected. For example, 'If I empathize that the unmusical person has my enjoyment of a Beethoven symphony, this deception will disappear as soon as I look him in the face and see his expression of deadly boredom.'¹⁵

I am now in the position to evaluate Stein's analysis of the empathic encounter. In the following pages, it shall be shown that her description of empathy as reproductive intuition is actually a restatement of the inference by analogy view. Initially, my claim may seem surprising given Stein's rejection of the theory of inference by analogy. I shall demonstrate that her notion of reproduction is ultimately equivalent to the process of inference, while her criterion of similarity in experiential structure actually constitutes a process of analogy.

Stein's notion of reproductive intuition requires detailed inspection. Intuition (Erfahrung) normally refers to our direct awareness of objects given to consciousness. Stein refrains from describing empathy as a species of ordinary intuition, because she realizes that the empathizer has no direct access to the content of foreign consciousness. (If we did have

direct access to another's stream of consciousness, we would be telepathic.) Empathy, however, is not the sort of direct visual awareness which we may have of tables and chairs, since we cannot view the experiences of others with the immediacy with which sensible objects can be perceived or that with which intelligible objects can be apprehended.

Again, Stein does not intend to say that we have direct access to a foreign experience. She maintains that we never reach the phenomenon of foreign experience, being left to create our own non-primordial version. Thus, Stein labels empathy as a species of intuition or direct experience, while maintaining that the empathizer never actually has direct entry to a foreign experience, being left to reproduce it. The empathizer experiences another's sorrow non-primordially, as if it were his own. This *as if* is at once an intuitive relation, while at the same time being formed reproductively or indirectly.

We can now see a contradiction in Stein's notion of reproductive intuition. It is misleading and inappropriate to call an indirect relation 'intuitive'. Once we realize that an empathic encounter never implies having privileged access to another stream of consciousness, empathy conceived as intuition loses all meaning. We must conclude that Stein ultimately conceives empathy as an indirect process, involving an 'as if' relation. To say that Stein ultimately conceives the empathic act as an indirect process does not yet entail that her view is tantamount to the theory of inference by analogy. However, a

closer look at the concept of reproduction reveals the equivalence.

Stein conceives reproduction (Nachvollzug) as a genuine experience that takes place in the empathizer, objectively similar to that which occurs in the other person. In the beginning of her work, she claims that reproduction occurs as the empathizer is 'pulled' or 'led into' a foreign primordial experience. In later description, the empathizer takes a more assertive role, actively transferring herself into the place of another. The reproduction is a re-enactment which lacks the primordial or original aspects of the foreign experience. It is a shadow or an approximation of the original, based on expression displayed by another lived body. Thus, for example, the empathizer is able to reproduce or approximate a friend's boredom with classical music based on his facial expression and posture. Now, this process of approximation is exactly equivalent to what we call inference. There is no significant difference between inferring a foreign experience based on behavioral clues, and reproducing a foreign experience based on the co-grasping of foreign experience with another lived bodily expression.

I am now in a position to demonstrate that Stein's view also incorporates the theory of analogy. Recall Stein's remarks concerning the limits of empathy: the limits of an empathic encounter are determined by the experiential structure of the empathizer. Empathic acts are unsuccessful if the experiential structure of the empathizer conflicts with the foreign

experiential structure. For example, a blind person would have difficulty empathizing with the visual experiences of a sighted person. And the individual who has never before experienced grief would be unable to adequately empathize with this feeling. According to Stein, the empathizer successfully understands the feelings or thoughts of another person if he has had the same or similar experience in the past. We must conclude that Stein conceives empathy as an act which is dependent on the basic similarity of experiential structure and that this similarity is the real basis of intersubjective experience and knowledge.

This criterion of similarity in experiential structure sounds suspiciously like a theory of analogy, which involves the attribution of characteristics based on behavioral similarity. And her notion of reproduction is exactly equivalent to the idea of inference. Therefore, Stein's phenomenology of empathy is merely a restatement of the theory of inference by analogy.

Stein's only criticism of the theory of inference by analogy is that it interprets other people as 'physical soulless and lifeless bodies'. In other words, she condemns the theory for rejecting the 'givenness' of psychic phenomenon. Yet, she simultaneously maintains that we have no primordial access to this phenomena. Again, the empathizer must be content to build his own version of a foreign experience based on the expression of the lived body.

Stein's view is initially compelling, but in the end fails to present a true phenomenology of the empathic encounter.

Her account is especially deficient because it lacks a description of the imaginative component of empathy.

Unfortunately, Stein remains within the boundaries of perceptual and spatial metaphor. In addition, the phenomenological analysis offered by Stein does not adequately incorporate the affective core of empathy which is essentially a process of 'feeling-into'. It does not incorporate fully enough that element of empathic knowledge which entails going beyond the evidence we see, and participating in an experience which is only partly visual.

We may continue to examine the possibility that empathy is indeed a sui generis species of intuition, following Stein's analysis. David Woodruff Smith is a phenomenologist who considers one form of empathy to be intuitive, or in his words, an 'acquainting experience'. In his work *The Circle of Acquaintance: Perception, Consciousness and Empathy*, Smith defines acquaintance as an intentional experience which is epistemologically, phenomenologically and ontologically direct.¹⁶ In other words, an acquainting experience is a kind of direct awareness which involves no conscious inference.

Smith lists three different types of empathic encounters. First, empathic identification involves reproducing in imagination the 'phenomenal character' of another's experience. Reproductive imagination constitutes the core of this type of empathic experience. Secondly, empathic judgement or empathy proper, involves a judgement concerning another's form of experience. It also involves a 'feeling' for what that

experience is like based once again on the imagination. Finally, in empathic perception, one simply recognizes another person as another 'I', capable of having all sorts of experiences.¹⁷ Smith claims that we need an element of empathy to distinguish material things from human beings. Recognizing a human body as an experiential subject requires a basic degree of empathic perception.

Smith notes that both empathic identification and empathic judgement do not qualify as acquainting experiences because they both involve some form of reproduction or conscious inference. However, empathic perception does count as acquaintance. It is a cognitive, perceptual experience containing no inference. Smith writes: 'As self-consciousness is a direct awareness of oneself as *I*, so other-awareness in empathic perception is a direct awareness of another person as *her* or *him* or *you*, understood as if *I*.'¹⁸ Smith consistently maintains that only perceptual experiences may qualify as acquainting experiences. However, we must remember that intuitive, empathic perception is only an elementary form of empathy. 'Empathy proper' does not involve intuition at all, but is a particular kind of inference.

Smith explores many aspects of the empathic encounter, including the role of feeling, understanding and imagination in other-awareness. Empathy, he says, basically refers to the knowledge one may gain of what another is experiencing. When successful, empathic knowledge is composed of judgements which

happen to be justified and true. Smith reminds us that many of the judgements which we habitually make concerning others are not necessarily empathic judgements. We may judge that another person is feeling sad, for example, without necessarily empathizing with that sadness. Empathic judgements imply, says Smith, that we understand the other's experience as if it were our own.¹⁹

What exactly does empathy add to our judgements about other people? According to Smith, empathy is simply a 'phenomenological quality that may or may not be present in an experience.'²⁰ This phenomenological quality has two main components: there is an emotional aspect, as well as an imaginative aspect. Smith underlines empathy as a predominantly emotional experience in which one feels another experience 'as if in it.'²¹ The imagination makes this emotional experience or feeling-into, possible. For example, if we wish to empathize with another's sadness, it is necessary to reproductively imagine that we feel sad. The empathic knowledge which we gain of another's experience is initially formed in phantasy, enabling us to gain an 'inner awareness' of that experience.²² Again, reproductive imagination allows the empathizer to develop an awareness of another's experience as if that experience were his own. Smith writes:

Reproductive imagination reproduces, in imagination, the feel of the imagined experience: the *phenomenal quality*, or *quale*, of such an experience, which would itself be part of the structure of inner awareness in such an experience itself.²³

Smith's phenomenology provides a remarkably detailed and accurate description of the empathic encounter from the standpoint of other-awareness. His account of feeling and reproductive imagination intuitively parallels our ordinary experience of the empathic encounter. The only inadequacy that can be located in Smith's analysis lies in his somewhat artificial division of empathic acts.

It is not clear that Smith's notion of empathic perception, the intuitive recognition of others as subjects, is actually a form of empathy. Recall that empathy always refers to a process of feeling-into another's experience. While the recognition of others as subjects may indeed be a matter of intuition, it is not clear that this recognition involves the use of empathy. It is not necessary to feel oneself into another's experience in order to conclude that another person is an 'I', capable of having experiences like mine. If the notion of empathic perception is actually a misnomer, we may conclude from Smith's phenomenology that no form of empathy involves intuitive awareness.

This conceptual friction between intuition and inference appears once again in the phenomenology of empathy. Max Scheler provides a phenomenological treatment of both empathy and sympathy (fellow-feeling) in his text *The Nature of Sympathy*.²⁴ However, Scheler's conception of empathy is formed from its use in aesthetic theories, and for this reason Scheler quickly dismisses empathy as a way of knowing others. The majority of his

work is devoted to showing how sympathy and spiritual love may dispel the metaphysical illusion of egocentricity. Through sympathy and love, says Scheler, we may overcome the warped and solipsistic view that we are metaphysically separate from one another. This lengthy discussion, however, is centered on the notion of sympathy which, in Scheler's view, is wholly different from the experience of empathy. Consequently, I shall not treat the main core of philosophical work in *The Nature of Sympathy*, which is not directly related to the notion of empathy. Instead, I shall briefly present 'empathy' and 'sympathy' as they are employed by Scheler, and shall later resolve the main epistemological difficulties which are raised by Scheler concerning empathy.

Scheler refers to empathy as it was originally conceived by Theodore Lipps. For Lipps, empathy is a process in which we project or attribute something of our own experience into others. For instance, I may empathize with another's joy by projecting a similar joyful experience of mine. I first perceive a gesture of joy in another and I have an immediate tendency to imitate it. Thus, I reproduce a previously experienced joy of my own which I take to be a similar joy and then project this reproduced experience back into the other person.²⁵ Here, 'projection' has the sense of attribution.

Throughout the *Nature of Sympathy*, Scheler strongly opposes this theory of projective empathy. He argues that the theory is powerless to explain our everyday knowledge of foreign

experiences, as well as the knowledge we have of the existence of other minds. Projective empathy, says Scheler, can never provide any understanding of a foreign experience, except 'delusive understanding'.²⁶ Scheler notes that it would be a pure coincidence if the reproduced experience which we project into another, actually corresponded to his actual experience.

And projective empathy is equally powerless to explain how it is we know that other minds exist. According to Scheler, the theory simply presupposes what it is called on to explain. In other words, when we project characteristics onto a person based upon an expressive gesture, it is already presupposed that another mind is present. Projective empathy '...can only serve to confirm the belief that it is myself which is present all over again and never that this self is other and different from my own.'²⁷

It is clearly the act of projection which is the source of error for Scheler. Projection blocks any direct acquaintance between subjects. In projective empathy, the empathizer never leaves the realm of his own experience. Scheler also maintains that the theory is based on the assumption that knowledge of self precedes knowledge of others. And this assumption, he argues, must be eradicated. Direct acquaintance between people is an experience which Scheler reserves for the term sympathy.

Scheler insists that attitudes that contribute to our apprehending or reproducing the experiences of others, must be distinguished from the experience of sympathy, or

'fellow-feeling'. The experience of fellow-feeling is additional to an experience in which the other is already understood.²⁸ Fellow-feeling involves no reproduction, projection or transference. Scheler holds that when we reproduce another's feeling, we sense the quality of the other's feeling without it being transmitted to us. Thus, reproduced feeling does not imply any sort of participation in a foreign experience.

In summary, Scheler believes that real intersubjective knowledge is grounded in intuition. Any indirect or reproductive form of intersubjective knowledge, such as empathy, Scheler finds delusive. Throughout his work, he argues that knowledge of another's experience presupposes acquaintance, or direct access to this experience. He argues that sympathy is the only direct route to the foreign experience. Sympathy is therefore the foundation of intersubjective communication and knowledge.

Scheler maintains that there is realm of experience which is intersubjectively shared. This realm of experience is accessed only through fellow-feeling. According to Scheler, initially there is a neutral stream of experience from which our own and foreign experiences are crystallized. Evidence for this neutral stream of experience is found when we simultaneously experience a thought as our own and as foreign.²⁹ Scheler gives this illustration:

Two parents stand beside the dead body of a beloved child. They feel in common the same sorrow, the same anguish. it is not that A feels this sorrow and B feels it also.... No, it is a *feeling-in-common*.³⁰

Like Stein, Scheler maintains that expressive phenomena is grasped directly without any process of reproduction or inference. He writes, 'But that experiences occur there is given for us in expressive phenomena- again, not by inference, but directly, as a sort of primary perception. It is in the blush that we perceive shame, in the laughter joy. To say that our only initial datum is the body is completely erroneous.'³¹

Scheler's critique of the theory of empathy is substantial. He argues that acts of empathy cannot lead to genuine knowledge of others because the experience is grounded upon self-knowledge only. Because empathy is essentially a process of reproduction rather than direct awareness, empathic knowledge is nothing more than guess work. This argument against empathic knowledge will be answered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

EMPATHY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

We have seen in both the psychoanalytic and phenomenological accounts of empathy an identical conceptual confusion. In the Literature of both disciplines, the foundation of empathic knowledge oscillates between the processes of intuition and inference. In addition, the role of feeling and imagination is ambiguous in all reports, often to the extent of being overlooked altogether. The project of this chapter will be to recover the most illuminating aspects of the arguments which have been presented so far. My redescription of empathy will draw on these arguments, but will also eclipse them, and will reveal empathy as a genuine way of knowing. Hopefully, the accuracy of my redescription will be confirmed by the reader's own everyday experience of the empathic encounter. Before undertaking this redescription, I shall begin by drawing some basic methodological parallels between the phenomenological and psychoanalytic endeavors.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOANALYTIC ACCOUNTS COMPARED

It is interesting to note that the founders of phenomenology and psychoanalysis- Husserl and Freud- had much in common. They both lived from the 1850's to the late 1930's and both studied under Franz Brentano. Despite the apparent differences between the two fields, there are some methodological

parallels which are relevant to the problem of empathy.

In his article entitled '*Toward Empathy: The Uses of Wonder*', Alfred Margulies notes that the methodological ideal of both phenomenology and psychoanalysis is to suspend biases and preconceptions.¹ Phenomenologists attempt to clear their perceptual field through the methodological procedure of the *epoche*- the bracketing of all hypotheses. The phenomenological observer is to bracket all concepts and all knowledge of the objects he perceives. The goal is to purify experience through this phenomenological reduction. Thus, the phenomenological reduction allows one to describe phenomenon purely, without cognitive intrusion.

Psychoanalysis, according to Margulies, also adopts this attitude of suspending knowledge through the method of free association. The goal of psychoanalysis is to encourage the patient to free associate- to push aside all judgments concerning mental life and to speak spontaneously. In addition, the psychoanalyst must also free associate by suspending judgement as he listens to the patient. During analysis, the analyst must maintain an open mind, and a neutral attitude. Only after analysis does the psychoanalyst come to a measured conclusion concerning the patient's mental state.

The phenomenological reduction and free association facilitate the opening up of new possibilities for interpreting phenomena. And the suspension of preconception allows the creative imagination to synthesize phenomena in new ways.

Margulies writes,

We can now describe both free association and the phenomenological reduction in relation to the creative imagination. Both processes have as their goal the opening up of possibilities. Both demand the suspension of preconceptions in the service of discovery; such suspension is characteristic of descriptions of the creative process. Further, the processes are unforced and unself-consciously creative; they are not planned.²

The project of phenomenology and psychoanalysis is to suspend closure, to avoid judging until the phenomena have been naively perceived. Interestingly, this suspension of closure is also characteristic of the empathic encounter. In order to successfully empathize with a foreign experience, one must search the foreign phenomena imaginatively. This imaginative play may take more or less time, depending on the cognitive interest of the empathizer. Finally, a judgement is made as the empathizer feels-into the other's experience. We can now see the connection between phenomenology, psychoanalysis and the empathic encounter. Phenomenology and psychoanalysis are disciplines whose recent focus on empathy befits their methodological fostering of the creative imagination. Furthermore, empathy is conceived as the new method of psychoanalysis precisely because it is compatible with the method of free association and the suspension of closure.

EMPATHY REDESCRIBED

All accounts of empathy agree that an empathic encounter involves the ability to gain access to another's experience. The central problem is to identify exactly how this access is achieved. Furthermore, if empathy is to be construed as a way of knowing, it is necessary to identify how empathic judgements are justified. We have seen in the phenomenological and psychoanalytic literature two main solutions to this problem: Stein, Scheler, Beres and Arlow argue that empathic access is essentially a species of intuition. These theorists maintain that the awareness of a foreign experience is justified and true because it is witnessed and grasped directly. An alternative solution presented in the work of Kohut, Buie and Smith, indicates that the nature of another's experience is always inferred in an empathic encounter. I shall resolve this problem concerning the nature of empathic knowledge by demonstrating that the intuition view is untenable.

Intuition is a form of knowledge in which the object is apprehended immediately. One knows that p intuitively if (a) p is true, (b) one is justified in believing that p , and (c) one's knowledge that p is not based upon one's inferring p from other propositions.³ Thus, through intuition, one is justified in believing that p even if one has no reasons for believing that p . What does this mean in the case of empathy? Knowing another's experience intuitively entails the immediate apprehension of this

foreign experience. When one grasps another's sorrow intuitively, for example, one claims to have direct awareness of this other's sorrow.

Now, the idea that one may have direct awareness of another's experience is implausible. It is impossible to maintain that one can experience another's sorrow as if it were one's own. If an individual were to have direct access to another's experiences, this person must have telepathic abilities. For most of us direct access to an experience is possible through introspection only. Every individual has a private realm of experience which may or may not be outwardly expressed. Even if an experience is expressed physically, its nature is never grasped directly. Thus, as an object of knowledge, the foreign experience is never directly present to the empathizer. Husserl notes the imperceptible nature of the foreign experience in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*:

...properly speaking, neither the other Ego himself, nor his subjective processes or his appearances themselves, nor anything else belonging to his own essence, becomes given in our experience originally. If it were, if what belongs to the other's own essence were directly accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I myself would be the same.⁴

Edith Stein realized the absurdity of intuitive empathic knowledge in her work, *On the Problem of Empathy*. Her aversion to the inference view forced her to posit the idea that empathy was a sui generis sort of intuition, namely reproductive intuition.

In chapter 3 I argued that this notion of reproductive intuition is a contradiction in terms. The act of reproducing a foreign experience always excludes direct awareness. Reproducing a foreign experience is an indirect process which is incompatible with the notion of intuition. Moreover, Stein's idea of reproductive intuition is nothing more than a restatement of the theory of inference by analogy.⁵

Rejecting a description of empathy which is based on intuition does not necessarily foster scepticism regarding intersubjective knowledge. Fortunately, human beings can gain knowledge of another's experience through their ordinary ability to infer. Judgements concerning foreign experiences are often justified in the intersubjective realm through the process of analogical inference. On the basis of physiological, linguistic and behavioral similarity, one is justified in concluding some unobserved fact about another individual. For instance, one may conclude that another is feeling angry, based on his facial and verbal expression; expression which implies the existence of anger.

Kohut, Buie and Smith correctly adopt the view that empathy is a form of analogical inference. The ability to form empathic judgements, they maintain, is developed as one correlates foreign mental states and expressions from one's own analogous experience. This process of analogical inference becomes so habitual in everyday social interaction, that it often appears to occur spontaneously or intuitively. When one sees

another human being crying, for example, one quickly apprehends a state of suffering. This knowledge, although rapidly achieved, remains inferred knowledge precisely because the other's experience of suffering is always partially concealed; veiled even to the most keen observer.

In everyday social interaction, we gain knowledge of others through the process of inference by analogy. Not all of this knowledge, however, is empathic knowledge. Knowing that another is suffering, for example, does not necessarily imply that one empathizes with that suffering. While the experience of empathy is grounded in inference by analogy, it can not be reduced to inference by analogy. Empathy is a particular sort of knowing; one which supplements basic intersubjective knowledge.

Empathy amplifies intersubjective knowledge because the content of the foreign experience affects and includes the empathizer. Recall that empathy is an experience of feeling-into. Feeling is what marks the difference between an empathic encounter and an ordinary cognitive one. A foreign experience must be *felt* in order to be known reflexively as is the case in empathy. In other words, when we shift our attention to other people, there is always a return to the self which completes the empathic process.

Feeling is what makes empathy a reflexive process. When another person's experience is felt, it always involves the person who is feeling. The empathizer has the other's experience only in feeling it. Imagine, for example, that one is

empathizing with a group of angry demonstrators. Having inferred their anger through inference by analogy, the empathizer actually feels their anger. This is not to say that the empathizer feels angry himself, but rather that he feels the anger of the demonstrators. The empathizer feels their experience as an object to be known. Without the existence of empathy, their anger does not involve the knower at all.

This reflexive function of feeling is articulated by Waltraut Stein in her article '*Cosmopathy and Interpersonal Relations*'.⁶ Although her analysis does not extend to the description of empathic encounters, Stein notes that 'Feeling has a reflexive character that seeing does not have and so presents us with the presence of a subject of experience appearing within experience'.⁷ In other words, Stein notices from an introspective standpoint that one must feel something in order to be aware of it as an experience of one's own; as one which is self inclusive. She writes, 'Following Heidegger, I would like to call this finding of oneself (Befindlichkeit) simply feeling and note that feeling to be feeling must be felt'.⁸

The affective component of empathy is itself cognitive. In other words, feeling has a cognitive function precisely because the foreign experience is known as it is felt. While inference is undoubtedly an intellectual process, in the empathic encounter inference is accomplished by the practice of feeling-into. The intellectual and affective processes are blurred to the point of being indistinguishable. When the

empathizer concludes, for instance, that another individual is feeling lonely, this conclusion is achieved through a process which is at once felt and reasoned. The inference is refined through feeling, which has a further cognitive function.

Although feeling-into is not itself a judgement, it takes on the same characteristics as it is accompanied by inference during an empathic encounter.

So far, this redescription of empathic knowledge has left an important epistemological problem unresolved. Unlike cognition of physical objects, empathic cognition has an object which must be reproduced, an object which is never directly present to the knower. In order to resolve this epistemological problem, we must consider another major component of the empathic encounter- the reproductive imagination.

Imagination is generally held to be the ability to form mental images or concepts not directly derived from sensation.⁹ It is also widely recognized that the imagination is vital to knowledge. The imagination completes the necessarily fragmentary data of the senses. In the outer perception of physical objects, for instance, it is impossible to perceive the whole of an object at once. For example, we cannot see more than three sides of a cube at one time, but we think of it as having all six sides. This completion of perception is the work of the reproductive imagination. This sort of imaginative power is reproductive because it depends on prior experience for its operation.¹⁰

We can now see that the reproductive imagination is

closely connected with analogy. In an empathic encounter, the empathizer witnesses another's behavioral expression and fulfills its content by reproducing it. The reproduction is based on the empathizer's own prior experiences, which he takes to be analogous to the other's. The empathizer plays imaginatively with the foreign phenomenon, suspending judgement until he locates and reproduces the content of the other's experience. We have already seen this notion of reproductive imagination in the work of Smith: 'Reproductive imagination reproduces, in imagination, the feel of the imagined experience: the phenomenal quality or quale, of such an experience....'¹¹

There is still an epistemological difficulty surrounding this description of empathic knowledge. The reproductive imagination is apparently restricted by the realm of the empathizer's own previous experiences. We must therefore find a way of construing the link between imagination and analogy that will explain how the individual may apprehend states that have no analogue in his own life. Certainly, a common source of misunderstanding in everyday social interaction is the tendency each of us has to judge others by himself. Recall Scheler's objection to empathic knowledge which states that empathy '...can only serve to confirm the belief that it is myself which is present all over again and never that this self is other and different from my own.'¹²

Scheler's objection was answered in the first chapter, where the notion of imaginative analogy was discussed. There it

was noted that the imagination has the ability to modify experience. Knowing another's experience implies the ability to become as if another. The ability to vary oneself in imagination is easily one of the most remarkable capacities of the human self. This imaginative modification allows us to know to some extent the situation of the blind, the deaf, or the schizophrenic. And it allows us to move conceptually back and forth between our own self and that of the other whom we want to know.

Imagination is perhaps the most intriguing component of empathy because it is essentially responsible for one's ability to put oneself in the place of others. Through a process of identification, the imagination extends the self out into the world and into other people. It is only imaginatively that we are able to leave the constraints of our own subjectivity. This extension of the self is more than a metaphor. It is captured in the ordinary phrase, 'imagine yourself in my position'. In addition, the imagination heightens our awareness of another's feelings because it has a free play that permits us to feel for others. It encourages us to know a situation, to ascertain events surrounding a foreign experience. In a remarkable way, it changes how we feel and what we sense. When we change ourselves imaginatively by vicariously experiencing another's feeling, knowing something of the original feeling becomes a possibility. The image is creative: it allows the knower a choice of possibilities, and the ability to experience freshly, although

vicariously.

What is unique about an empathic encounter is that the imaginative reproduction is itself an act of feeling. That is to say, the image is not something which is exclusively visual. The imagination and feeling are so intertwined in the act of empathy, that it is perhaps more accurate to say that feeling itself has an imaginative function. The reproduction of feeling is a case of feeling the other's feeling, but again it is not the same as going through the experience itself. Through reproduction, a genuine experience takes place in the empathizer, similar to the original experience of someone else.

The probability that the empathizer will correctly reproduce a foreign experience decreases, as experiential disparity increases. However, an individual may come to understand an experience which he has never before undergone through the modification of his own previous experience. For example, one may gain knowledge of what it is like for someone to have religious faith, or to be wealthy, or to be elderly, even if one has never had these experiences before. Similarly, an anthropologist will often achieve a rich empathic understanding of the practices and beliefs of a foreign culture. And the psychoanalyst will come to grasp the foreign world of the schizophrenic. By imaginatively modifying one's own experiences in light of a foreign context, one may successfully reproduce a foreign experience, and feel it as if it were one's own.

Consider the following example (provided by Alfred

Schutz): the recipient of a letter has trouble understanding the feelings of the writer. What does he do? He can try to reconstruct the intention of the writer by guessing at some possible intentions and then comparing them to the actual propositional content of the sentence. He may conclude, 'I see what he was trying to say, but he really missed his mark and said something else. If I had been he, I should have put it in such and such a way.'¹³ These situations arise again and again in ordinary social interaction; situations in which an individual is attempting to know, to imaginatively reproduce the experiences of another. In the empathic encounter, the individual will try to locate anything which is remotely analogous to this foreign experience, and he will modify his own analogous experience imaginatively based on what he already knows about the other- his situation, his biography. He will suspend closure until he successfully reproduces an experience which matches the foreign expression and context. Finally, he will feel-into this foreign experience, feeling it as if it were his own. This is what happens during an empathic encounter.

Because the expression of one's experiences are not always open to view, we do not have perfect empathic knowledge. It is commonplace that people frequently make mistakes when empathizing. Someone may misunderstand altogether, for example, by empathizing romantic love when the emotion was actually one of friendship. Or, more often, the empathized experience will be only slightly off. Unfortunately, an empathized experience (and

intersubjective knowledge of any kind) is never precisely right. Our knowledge of other people, like our knowledge of anything at all, is partial and always open to error.

Like other forms of knowledge, empathic knowledge has the status of probable knowledge. As with other forms of knowledge, certainty is an excessively stringent criterion of knowledge. Fortunately, like other inferences, empathic inferences may be either disproved or confirmed. In the intersubjective realm, an empathic judgement may be directly confirmed by the other. For instance, the empathizer may describe his reproduced version of another's experience of anguish. His empathic judgement is confirmed in ordinary discourse when the other responds by saying: 'Yes, that's it; that's exactly how I feel.'

It is interesting to note that empathy construed as a way of knowing is deeply embedded in ordinary discourse. It does not make sense to say that I empathize X, without knowing the nature of X. Nor does it make sense to empathize X simply by believing or suspecting that X is such and such. Similarly, it does not make sense to be glad that it is sunny outside, if I do not know that it is sunny, or only believe that it is sunny. The point is that empathy, like many other affective experiences, presupposes knowledge. The experience itself arises out of cognitive interest.

We can now understand empathy as a complex process which has combined affective-cognitive features, involving capacities of reasoning, perceiving, imagining and feeling. Empathy is an

experience which has both a passive, receptive stage (the suspension of closure), followed by an active, cognitive stage. The first stage involves the imaginative-affective interplay between our internalized feelings of others and our own analogous experiences. The second phase involves the use of inference and reproduction, motivated by a cognitive interest in the feelings we introject. This is a description of empathy which captures the experience of coming to know another's experience by 'stepping into his shoes'. For those who have developed their ability to experience freshly, and to modify themselves imaginatively into other worlds, empathy is a way of knowing with a high success rate. When perfected, empathy involves a peculiar movement of an imaginatively transformed self into the place of another; an imaginatively transformed self who succeeds in reconstructing and knowing a slice of foreign experience.

Like other forms of intersubjective knowledge, the epistemology of empathy is one which is grounded in experiential similarity. In this sense, intersubjective knowledge is distinct from our ordinary perceptual apprehension of physical objects. Human beings communicate and understand one another by locating universal ground; by ascertaining meaning which emerges from a shared human condition. To be sure, individual experience is highly idiosyncratic, grounded in a singular contextual web. However, because humans are situated in the same world and are physiologically identical, experiential similarity transcends disparity. The epistemology of empathy, and of intersubjective

knowledge in general, is firmly rooted in the analogous.

To say that intersubjective knowledge is based on experiential similarity does not imply that self knowledge precedes our knowledge of others. Nor does it imply that knowledge of others is simply a conceptual projection of self knowledge. It is true that the empathizer seeks an analogue in his own life when apprehending the thoughts and feelings of others. However, this analogue, this particular experience of the knower, is never produced in isolation. Although an experience always exists as the content of an individual consciousness, this experience is also intersubjective: it arises in relation to others and is defined in relation to others.

In philosophy there is widespread belief that any individual experience presupposes the presence of other people since one is always situated in a social world. And it is well known that self knowledge and knowledge of others are intimately related.¹⁴ One knows one's own strengths and limitations, for example, in relation to others. In addition, any private experience of suffering or joy is always defined and measured in an intersubjective context. It is not the case that self knowledge precedes knowledge of others (or vice versa). On the contrary, in social interaction there is a fundamental circularity between knowing oneself and knowing other people. One's own experiences are always defined and shaped in relation to other people. Simultaneously, foreign experiences are apprehended in relation to one's own.

Again, knowledge of others is premised on the existence of experiential similarity. In other words, knowing others relates to self-knowledge through a process of analogy. Conversely, self knowledge is achieved in the opposite direction: the relation of self knowledge to knowledge of others is one of exclusion or dissimilarity. More precisely, knowing one's own characteristics entails the separation of oneself from the other; it entails measuring oneself against the other rather than with him. Through a process of exclusion, an individual judges himself, for example, to be more or less intelligent, honest or talented than other people. Put simply, by focusing on dissimilarity the individual becomes clear on what he is not. Moreover, the quality of one's own experience is known as it is distinguished from the experiences of others. It is intuitively clear that the other remains indispensable in the knowledge of one's own particular experiences and in the knowledge of one's own identity. Only against the other does the self realize itself as a unity distinct from others.

During an empathic encounter, the empathizer succeeds in leaving the realm of his own experience. While he cannot contact the other's thoughts and feelings directly, still he manages to reach foreign experience vicariously.¹⁵ The empathizer uses materials of his own in order to reproduce a piece of the other's world. In many empathic encounters, this reproduction is justified and therefore meets the requirements of knowledge. That is to say, the reproduced, foreign experience is more than a

matter of opinion on the part of the empathizer. The content of the reproduction is not freely invented, but is determined by the circumstance of the other. The foreign experience is revealed to the knower through the other's expression, context, and biography. And the empathizer's reproduction also receives confirmation. It is clear, therefore, that empathy is an experience which is undeniably cognitive.

Empathic knowledge requires only that there be the best of grounds for what is claimed. In the intersubjective realm these grounds are supplied when people reveal themselves by what they do, by their actions, gestures, facial expressions and finally by what they say. It is true that individual experiences are necessarily private. It is also true that some experiences are simply incommunicable. In the majority of cases, however, experiences are both communicable and knowable precisely because there is an underlying similarity to human experiential content. It is true that to some degree one's experience of fear, for example, is private. But it is also true that the same situation turns out to be frightening to many, and that an individual fear experience can be communicated and known. The phenomena of social interaction provides evidence which is both objective and universally acceptable.

There is a pervasive scepticism surrounding intersubjective knowledge. In contemporary society, there is widespread belief that individual thoughts and feelings are unknowable *in principle*. How often does one hear the following

phrase: 'You can't possibly know how I feel because you are not in my situation'. This attitude is particularly tenacious when cultural or gender difference is present. This relentless suspicion concerning knowledge of others is fallacious and must be eradicated. I have shown in this work that for those of us who are willing to develop our imaginative-affective-cognitive skills, knowing foreign mental and affective states moves us closer to apprehending the boundaries of human experience. In featuring experiential similarity rather than disparity, the epistemology of the empathic encounter proves to be a reliable means to discredit the sceptic.

GLOSSARY OF DEPTH-PSYCHOLOGY TERMS

COUNTER TRANSFERENCE: The arousal of the analyst's repressed feelings by the analytic situation; especially the transference by the analyst of his repressed feelings upon the analysand.

FANTASY: Imagining a complex object or event in concrete symbols or images, whether or not the object or event exists. Fantasy represents a sort of wish fulfilment.

FREE ASSOCIATION: An unconstrained sequence of ideas or of words. In the association experiment, a word is spoken and the subject speaks another word as quickly as possible. In psychoanalysis, the analysand is asked to begin with some item in a dream, or some remark he had made, and relate whatever comes to mind.

IDENTIFICATION: An automatic, unconscious mental process whereby an individual becomes like another in one or several aspects.

PROJECTION: The process of attributing one's own traits, attitudes, or subjective processes to others.

PSYCHOANALYSIS: The science which investigates the interaction of conscious and unconscious processes, and has as its aim the discovery and formulation of laws involving the function of the mental system.

RESISTANCE: Intentional withholding of information. Opposition to any attempt to lay bare the content of the unconscious.

TRANSFERENCE: Displacement of affect from one object to another. The process whereby a patient shifts affects applicable to another person onto the psychoanalyst.

UNCONSCIOUS: Characterizing any activity or mental structure of which a person is not aware. The unconscious activities are not open to direct scrutiny but have dynamic effects on conscious process and behavior.

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12. Scheler, 242.

13. Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans. G. Walsh and F. Lehnert, (Northwestern University Press, 1967), 128.

14. The relation between self and other may be spelled out in terms of being rather than knowledge, as for example in the work of Jean-Paul Sartre or Gabriel Marcel.

15. I have retained Kohut's notion of vicarious introspection here.

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