



Perspective

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Introduction

This paper will be a discussion of Edith Stein's concept of empathy, as seen in her 1916 doctoral dissertation, *On the Problem of Empathy [Zum Problem der Einfühlung]*. It will focus specifically on clarifying the three-fold structure attributed to empathy by Stein, as well as investigating what it would mean to experience fulfilment in empathy.

In order to accomplish this, the following discussion will be divided into five sections. The first section of the paper, 'Characterizing Empathy', will provide a detailed overview of Stein's three-grade empathic process, and make clear how it is that empathic acts differ from outer perception, as well as memory, imagination, and expectation. Following this, the second section, 'The Emergence of the Experience', will focus specifically on the first grade of Stein's empathic process, whereby the feeling of the other becomes clear to the empathizer. Here I will discuss what exactly is implicated in this first empathic modality and propose that subdividing this grade into two will more correctly reflect the acts undertaken by the empathizing individual. The third section, 'Fulfilling Explication', will then be dedicated to the notion of fulfilment in empathic acts: is it possible for us to fulfil the empty intentions we are confronted with at the beginning of the empathic process? The final two sections will be devoted to further unpacking the idea of empathic fulfilment, so as to ascertain the method by which fulfilling explication may be possible. The first of these, 'Fulfilment through Imitation', will look into the possibility of understanding empathic fulfilment as being achieved through the imitation of the other. Here I will draw comparisons between Stein's theory and that of Theodor Lipps, who maintained that empathy should be understood as inherently mimetic. Finally, in the section, 'Fulfilment through Imagination', I will demonstrate how an alternative conception of empathic fulfilment as reliant on acts of imagination can solve the problems left behind by theories of explication by means of imitation.

Before commencing, I should first clarify what I mean when I use the word empathy. Today, the term is normally employed to refer to our reaction to knowledge about the psychic state of others. This essay, however, will abide by a more traditional phenomenological understanding of empathy, whereby the term concerns our very encountering of the other as another 'I', as well as our knowledge of the psychic state of that 'I'. This paper will focus particularly on the latter half of that definition, namely how it is that I come to grasp the psychic state of the other. More specifically, my paper is

concerned with *fulfilment* in empathy. This means not only identifying that the other is an emotive being in a certain psychic state but being able to recognize the particular psychic state the other is in and its various implications.

I should also note that while much of Stein's phenomenology is based upon that of her mentor and professor, Edmund Husserl, references to other thinkers such as Max Scheler can also be identified in her theory of empathy and emotions. As such, Stein's own phenomenological theory does not entirely adhere to that of Husserl, and her work on empathy should not be treated as a mere continuation of Husserlian thought. For this reason, my paper will, as far as possible, take its basic phenomenological concepts from Stein's work alone, so as to ensure maximal conceptual clarity.

Characterising Empathy

Empathic acts, for Stein, lie somewhere between acts of presentation and representation, in that they share characteristics of both. Let us first observe presentation, as exemplified by acts of outer perception. In outer perception my intended object is bodily present before me; it is given to me originally and primordially. Similarly, in empathy, the person with whom I am empathising is also directly present before me. Thus, what empathy has in common with outer perception is that, “[i]n both cases the object itself is here and now.”¹ Representation, on the other hand, may be observed in acts of memory, imagination, and expectation. What characterises these acts is that they are, “primordial as present experience though nonprimordial in content.”² To take the example of memory, my remembering of a certain moment past is primordial in that it is an experience I am presently undergoing – I am, at present, remembering. The content of my memory, however, cannot be considered primordial, as the object of that memory will never face me with the same original givenness that it did when it was first lived. Thus, Stein says that, “[t]he present non-primordially points back to the past primordially. This past has the character of a former ‘now.’”³ But where empathy diverges from these forms of representation is that the subject of the representational experience is not the

¹ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Stein (Washington: ICS Publications, 1989), 7.

² *Ibid.*, 10.

³ *Ibid.*, 8.

representing subject but another.⁴ This is most succinctly laid out by Monika Dullstein in her table referring to Stein's distinction between different kinds of mental acts.⁵

Table 1 Stein's distinction between different kinds of mental acts

	Content is primordially given	Act and content overlap in time	Content posited as being existent	Act and content involve the same subject
Perception	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Expectation (of own mental state)	No	No	Yes	Yes
Memory (of own mental state)	No	No	Yes	Yes
Imagination (of own mental state)	No	Yes	No	Yes
Empathy	No	Yes	Yes	No

Stein further explains that all cases of representation, including empathy, are to be understood as having, “three grades or modalities of accomplishment.”⁶ Each of these grades affords us a higher level of understanding. In empathy, then, each grade means a greater comprehension of the other. We do not necessarily go through all of these grades in all our representations, often completing solely the first one or two. In empathy, the first of these grades is the *emergence of the experience*, in which the psychic experience of the other becomes clear to me through empathy. The second grade is that of *fulfilling explication*, where I understand or fulfil this experience by joining the experiencing other in their position facing the object of their experience. The final grade involves the *comprehensive objectification of the explained experience*; here I return to my original position so as to see the experiencing other and their experience as my object once again.

The first grade of empathy, that of the emergence of the experience, may be understood as resembling an act of outer perception. In this initial modality we stand before our object, the empathetee, grasping them as a lived body along with their fields of sensation. We do this in the same way as we perceive physical objects in our

⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁵ Monika Dullstein, ‘Direct Perception and Simulation: Stein’s Account of Empathy,’ *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 4, no. 2 (April 2013): 345.

⁶ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 11; I will use the terms ‘grade’ and ‘modality’ interchangeably, as Stein herself does.

surroundings, by having fulfilled intentions of their visible profiles and emptily intending those profiles that are hidden to us. These concepts of fulfilled and empty intentions will be further fleshed out in the following section, but for now what is of importance is the fact that because acts of outer perception pertain to the category of presentations, we may understand the empathic act of the first modality to be one of *empathic presentation*.

However, in the second grade (fulfilling explication), we witness the transformation of something Fredrik Svenaeus classes as, “merely perception-like,”⁷ into something of a different nature; we are no longer dealing with an act of presentation but rather one of representation. This implies that the intended object is no longer bodily present before me, as I have shifted from intending the empathee to intending the empathee’s object alongside them. Here, “the representation exhibits [...] the non-primordial parallel to the having of the experience.”⁸ Empathy’s second modality is thus one of empathic representation. The third and final grade can then be understood as a uniting of these two perspectives. Presentation and representation come together to give the empathising agent a more holistic understanding of the empathee and their psychic state.

The Emergence of the Experience

The following four sections of my paper will now further explore the first two modalities of Stein’s empathic process, those of the emergence of the experience and fulfilling explication. Stein describes every individual as having fields of sensation. Moreover, it is possible for one to be aware of another’s fields of sensation. This awareness, according to Stein, is much like the awareness we have of the hidden profiles of three-dimensional objects. When I look at a table from above and see only its top, the entirety of the table (including its underside and legs) are also grasped by me. The table’s hidden sides are con-primordial to the side of it which appears; all its sides share the same originality and thus are given to me all at once. While I have access to the top of the table through outer perception, I have access to the rest of the table by means of apperception; I have a fulfilled intention of the top of the table while emptily intending the rest of it.

Stein then argues that I can be aware of, or apperceive, another person’s fields of

⁷ Fredrik Svenaeus, ‘Edith Stein’s Phenomenology of Sensual and Emotional Empathy,’ *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 17, no. 4 (November 2017): 744.

⁸ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 11.

sensation just as I can be aware of the bottom of the table even when I can only see its top. The other's fields of sensation are con-primordially given to me, that is to say, I emptily intend them. When I see the physical being before me I also 'see' their fields of sensation, and I grasp this all together in the same moment. This means I recognise the other as a feeling, living being, as another 'I', because I am aware that they too have fields of sensation. This is the first grade in the empathic process.

Two things seem to be implicated in this initial movement. Firstly, I become conscious of that which the other is feeling. The other's smile, for instance, is given to me already as a happy smile, and so their feeling of happiness is given to me. But before this can be the case, I must already have recognised the other as a feeling being – a being who, like me, has fields of sensation. While Stein is right to emphasise the essential nature of this initial recognition of the other as a living, feeling being, it is difficult to actually distinguish between this and the emergence of the other's experience in her account of the first grade of empathy. The first modality in Stein's empathic process seems to include both an initial appraisal of the other as an 'I' as well as a grasping of that 'I's experience. Do I, in this first empathic movement, witness the other merely as another feeling 'I', or do I already identify the particular sensations this other is experiencing?

The Husserlian phenomenological tradition would dictate that these two events are to be understood as taking place simultaneously; that I intend the other's particular feelings in intending their fields of sensation. In this case, one would argue that when I perceive the other, I immediately recognise a lived body with fields of sensation, and in this same moment I grasp the other's particular feelings. We may return to Stein's comparison of empathy to outer perception as a means to clarify this issue. Stein holds that in perceiving, "we immediately see thing[s] as belonging to a certain type, and we co-perceive (via appresentation) the hidden profiles of a tridimensional object while only seeing the manifest ones."⁹ Analogously, in directly perceiving another individual, we co-perceive the other's hidden fields of sensation. This suggests that it is apperception which allows me, in both cases, to co-perceive (or emptily intend) the object's hidden profiles. In one case I co-perceive the underside of the table, and in the other I co-perceive the other's hidden fields of sensation. But should it be true that apperception is involved in both these acts, what exactly does it mean for one to apperceive? My co-perception of

⁹ Michela Summa, 'Empathy and Anti-Empathy: Which Are the Problems?' in *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood: Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*, eds. Elisa Magrí and Dermot Moran, *Contributions to Phenomenology* 94 (New York: Springer, 2017), 97.

the underside of the table concerns the fact that three-dimensional objects of this kind are given via a manifold of profiles – I can directly perceive only one of these profiles at a time but may simultaneously apperceive others. However, it remains unclear what these profiles would be in the analogy to empathic experiences. Are the profiles that we apperceive indicative of the presence of foreign fields of sensation more generally, or do they give to us the other's particular feelings? Ultimately, it seems whether or not these two acts should be understood as taking place concurrently depends on whether we take there to be instances in which one can see and recognise a foreign body as a lived body with fields of sensations and yet not immediately grasp their having any kind of particular feeling. Should such instances exist, they would be examples of moments in which I experience the emergence of a lived body without an accompanying emergence of that lived body's particular experience.

An intuitive first place to look for these sorts of occurrences would be in our experience of non-human animals. Stein understands human bodies as being of a different 'type' to animal bodies. Her conception of 'types' comes from Husserl's own discussions on the topic, where, "[i]t is the creation of object types [...] that allows the world to appear as familiar to us, even in the perception of novel objects and situations."¹⁰ Crucially for Husserl, "each man has a general type, determinate in manifold ways and each particular man has his particular individual type."¹¹ But while there are plenty of variations within the type 'human' (such as the differences between children and adults, men and women), we understand our physical bodies as being, "an accidental realization of a type that is variable within definite limits."¹² This means that despite the differences which might exist between my body and that of another human being, sensual empathy is still very much possible. Moreover, Svenaeus explains that:

what is given in [grade] one prescribes possibilities of [grade] two that are not always fulfilled. The reason the prescribed possibilities are not carried through, according to Stein, is that the lived bodies of empathee and empathizer are of different types or that the empathizer is lacking the relevant experiences to be

¹⁰ Darian Meacham, 'What Goes Without Saying: Husserl's Concept of Style,' *Research in phenomenology* 43 (2013): 9.

¹¹ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 278/290; For a more detailed explanation of Husserl's notion of types, see Husserl, *Ideas II* (§60–61), and Meacham, 'What Goes Without Saying: Husserl's Concept of Style.'

¹² Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 54.

able to proceed.¹³

This would seem to suggest we can only empathise with bodies of the same type as our own, and thus can only interpret fellow human beings as lived bodies. But Stein rejects this position, claiming it to be a limitation that is not yet unequivocal. Rather, “[t]he type ‘human physical body’ does not define the limits of the range of my empathic objects, more exactly, of what can be given to me as a living body,” but instead, “marks off a range within which a very definite degree of fulfillment is possible.”¹⁴ This would mean Stein posits the first grade of empathy to be possible regardless of the type to which the empathee’s body belongs. However, she does clarify that when it comes to non-human animals, certain things can be, “given to me only as empty presentations without the possibility of fulfillment.”¹⁵ I believe Stein to be positing that it is possible to encounter a body of a different type to my own, recognise it as a lived body, and yet not have any particular feelings emerge toward oneself from that body. An animal may carry out movements totally unfamiliar to me, and these movements will nevertheless be given to me as lived movements emerging from a lived body. But despite my appraisal of the lived character of these movements, it remains possible that I can go no further in my comprehension of them. It seems then that Stein’s initial step in the empathic process, that of the emergence of the experience, should be understood as being preceded by yet another step, much more basic in nature: the emergence of the lived body. Together, these two steps form the first empathic modality. This allows us to maintain Stein’s three-fold structure of empathic experience, while still differentiating between the two distinct movements that take place within the first of these modalities.

Taking into account the above discussion regarding the further division to be made within Stein’s first empathic modality, we may understand the (new) initial step of the emergence of the lived body as prescribing the possibilities of the next step, the emergence of the other’s experience. The emergence of this experience then prescribes the possibilities of fulfilling explication. It is important, however, that just as the possibilities of fulfilling explication may not always be carried through, the same is to be said of the possibilities of the initial emergence of the foreign experience. In the case that the body of the empathiser is of a different type to that of the body of the empathee, two events may occur. The empathiser and empathee’s bodies may belong to types that are

¹³ Svenaeus, ‘Edith Stein’s Phenomenology of Sensual and Emotional Empathy,’ 749.

¹⁴ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 55.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

close enough to allow for a level of empathic understanding. As Stein explains, “[s]hould I perhaps consider a dog's paw in comparison with my hand, I do not have a mere physical body, either, but a sensitive limb of a living body. And here a degree of [empathic] projection is possible, too.”¹⁶ In this case, despite the difference in types, the empathiser is able to proceed to the step of the emergence of the experience. It is also possible, however, that the type difference results in an unbridgeable gap between the individuals, in which case the empathiser would not be able to move past the simple recognition of the foreign body as a lived body.

At this point we have established that Stein's first empathic grade can be understood as constituted of two steps: the emergence of the lived body and the emergence of the experience. Should the individuals' types allow for the latter step, these first two steps take place in the same instance. The empathic process is thus constituted of four acts. Below, *Table A* displays Stein's original conception of the three-grade empathic process. *Table B* then provides my revised understanding of empathy, in which Stein's first grade is conceived as consisting of two distinct acts.

Table A	
1.	The Emergence of the Experience
2.	Fulfilling Explication
3.	Comprehensive Objectification of the Explained Experience

Table B	
1.	i. The Emergence of the Lived Body ii. The Emergence of the Experience
2.	Fulfilling Explication
3.	Comprehensive Objectification of the Explained Experience

There are difference kinds of accomplishment at stake in each of these empathic modalities. In the first step (the emergence of the lived body), accomplishment entails an awareness of the presence of the other's 'hidden profiles', in this case an awareness of indeterminate fields of sensation pertaining to the empathee. This does not “require a detailed understanding of the details of the other's perceptual field.”¹⁷ Accomplishment in the next step requires the recognition of the other's particular feeling; I do not simply have an awareness of indeterminate fields of sensation but rather I am aware of determinate feelings. Crucially, should the emergence of the experience be possible, it

¹⁶ Ibid., 55.

¹⁷ James Jardine, 'Stein and Honneth on Empathy and Emotional Recognition,' *Human Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 577.

does not occur after the emergence of the lived body, but with the emergence of the lived body. I intend the other's particular feeling in intending the presence of their fields of sensation, because the two are given to me in a conprimordial manner. As James Jardine explains:

the experiential possibilities of empathy are not exhausted by our immediate perceptual contact with the other. The lived perception of the other as an embodied subject always implies tendencies towards further empathic enactments, in which the other's empathetic sense can be explicated, further determined, and potentially superseded. Some of these motivated enactments remain within the realm of empathic perception.¹⁸

These kinds of motivated enactments within the realm of empathic perception are constitutive of the emergence of the other's experience, and hence are what allow for the shift from the first to the second empathic step. Jardine continues that:

In other cases, however, the empathic enactments motivated by our initial perceptual contact with the other, and that serve to explicate its sense, are of an entirely different level of accomplishment (*Vollzugsstufe*). [...] Here we are dealing not merely with a perception of the other as an embodied and experiencing subject, but a presentification (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of her experiences with their objective correlates.¹⁹

Here Jardine refers to the movement of our second modality toward fulfilling explication, in which an act of empathic presentification (or representation) brings us closer to a deeper understanding of the other's experience.

Fulfilling Explication

Even with the above revisions, the second empathic modality, that of fulfilling explication, remains unclear. We have already seen that fulfilment for acts of presentation such as outer perception entails a shift in perspective so as to allow for the fulfilled intention of previously empty intended profiles. I need only look underneath the table to fulfil my previously empty intention of its underside. But the psychic nature of a psycho-physical individual's hidden profiles excludes the possibility of such a perspectival shift; “[d]ifferent from the hidden profiles of a spatio-temporal thing, with

¹⁸ Ibid., 577.

¹⁹ Ibid., 577.

others' states of mind I cannot change the orientation to fulfill my empty intentions."²⁰ Consequently, the possibility of primordial fulfilment is entirely excluded. Because I cannot simply peer into the other's psyche in the same manner that I can glance under the table, I will never have a primordial experience of the other's feeling.

As we have seen, Stein holds that foreign fields of sensation may only be brought to givenness through either empathic presentation or representational intuition.²¹ If acts of empathic presentation are unable to fulfil our empty intentions of others' feelings, our only possibility of fulfilment lies in the second empathic modality, in an act of representational intuition, or empathic representation. Stein suggests that in this grade, I take the place of the other in order to be able to grasp their experience from their perspective. In this movement, my intentional object shifts from being the experience of the other to the object of the other's experience; in fulfilment both myself and the other share the same intentional object.

Frederik Svenaeus clarifies the movement from the first to the second grade of empathy by distinguishing between two different understandings of con-originality (or conprimordiality) employed by Stein. In the first step:

The sensual feelings [...] 'pouring out of the lived body' of the other person are perceived exactly as *not* being mine, as contrasting to the *original* sensual pattern of feelings spreading out from my lived body in and by which the conoriginalfeelings of the other person are perceived. This is what con-original means in the first [grade]: general contrast of all sensual feelings belonging to me (originally perceived) versus to the other person (non-originally perceived).²²

In the second modality, "my sensual feelings follow the sensual feelings of the other person through," and so here con-original instead designates, "that my sensual feelings feel their way into the sensual field of the other lived body and I thereby experience a contrast between the same sort of feeling as had by me in contrast to being had by the other."²³ It is important to note that even though I join the other in their position facing the object of their experience, I am always aware that this object pertains to the feeling of the other, and at no point in the empathic process is this object primordially given to me.

²⁰ Summa, 'Empathy and Anti-Empathy,' 96.

²¹ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 54.

²² Svenaeus, 'Edith Stein's Phenomenology of Sensual and Emotional Empathy,' 749–50.

²³ *Ibid.*, 750.

Consequently, Stein here too excludes the possibility of the primordial fulfilment of foreign fields of sensation, arguing that the only kind of fulfilment possible in these cases is indeed empathic representation. But what exactly does empathic representation entail?

Before exploring empathic representation in particular, let us return to a discussion of fulfilment in acts of representation more generally. Regarding the fulfilment of acts of memory, Stein explains that, “[t]he same act of representation in which what is remembered emerges before me as a whole implies certain tendencies. When these unfold, they expose ‘traits’ in their temporal course, how the whole remembered experience was once primordially constituted.”²⁴ Similarly, in an empathic act, the feeling of the other emerges before me and implies certain tendencies. According to Stein, I am drawn into these tendencies toward a full explication of the other’s mental state. But how exactly can this explication be carried out?

While, as we have seen, a shift in perspective toward a view of the other’s feelings remains an impossibility, there is a shift of a different kind achieved in empathic representation – a shift in intentional object. My intentional object is no longer the feeling other present before me, but rather the very object of that other’s feeling. The German word *Vergegenwärtigung* is used by Stein to characterise empathic explication. The word may be translated into English as representation, presentification, realisation, or even visualisation. Empathic fulfilment is then dependent on the successful representation, presentification, realisation or visualisation of the object of the other’s feeling. Furthermore, in Stein’s explanation of empathic fulfilment, she speaks of the method of empathic projection, writing that explication requires that I project myself into the position of the other.

The following sections of this paper will explore the different manners in which we can interpret Stein’s notion of ‘empathic projection’ as a form of representation, or *Vergegenwärtigung*. More specifically, the following two sections will examine two distinct interpretations of empathic projection: one will focus on empathic fulfilment as relying on a kind of imitation of the empathee, and the other will look at understanding empathic fulfilment as dependent on a form of imagination.

Fulfilment through Imitation

²⁴ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 9.

The discussion of imitation in empathy was first widely popularised by Theodor Lipps in his text, 'The Knowledge of Other Egos'. Lipps is today, "remembered as the father of the first scientific theory of *Einfühlung*,"²⁵ being the first to employ the term to explicate how we understand the mental states of others. Lipps holds that empathy is ultimately based on imitation, or a projection of the self into the other. He posits that when I observe another person, two distinct but inextricably linked acts take place. Firstly, I perceive the other's body and its movements, which are located in the external world. But secondly, I also 'grasp' the other's mental state through an act of empathy, and for Lipps, the only possible source of this is my own mind. This happens through a tendency toward imitation, which Lipps regards as an essential characteristic of human beings. When I observe another person carrying out a certain action, I tend to imitate that action, whether by physically acting or simply making the mental movements as if I were physically moving my body in such a way. This reproduction of the gesture of the other is closely tied with the gesture's corresponding mental state; when I imitate someone moving their hand, whether outwardly or inwardly, the mental state that accompanies such a movement is automatically elicited within me. This means that through gestural imitation we are able to carry out a 'mental imitation' of a certain sort. Lipps gives the example of watching an acrobat perform his routine on a tightrope. As I observe the acrobat's every move, I am so drawn in that I essentially leave my own ego behind, and experience everything through the ego of the acrobat; it is as if I am right there in his place, as if I too am on the tightrope.²⁶

According to Stein, Lipps' claim is that in my empathetic taking up of the acrobat's position, the acrobat's ego actually becomes unified with my own, and there is a complete overlapping of psychic experience. From this, she contends that Lipps' argument is fundamentally flawed as it confuses being drawn into the experience that is at first given objectively, with fulfilling that experience's implied tendencies. Stein does not agree that there is a complete coincidence with the empathised experience; she does not concur that the two egos become one through the empathising act. Svenaeus agrees with Stein, writing that:

When I perceive the acrobat on the tightrope (Lipps's most famous example), I must first see that he is there, balancing on the rope, his lived body expressing

²⁵ Christiane Montag, Jürgen Gallinat, and Andreas Heinz, 'Theodor Lipps and the Concept of Empathy: 1851–1914,' *American Journal of Psychiatry* 165, no. 10 (October 2008): 1261.

²⁶ Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. Peter Heath (New York: Routledge, 2017), 18.

certain sensual and life-based feelings by way of a sensual-perceptual field that contrasts to mine. In the second step, I then follow this sensual perceptual field that I am drawn into and only at this point do I con-originally experience the same sort of sensual feelings that he is having when balancing.²⁷

Svenaesus further emphasises that while, “Lipps gets the con-original experience of [grade]- two empathy right, [...] he does not acknowledge that this experience presupposes a different con-original experience of the acrobat in [grade] one.”²⁸

Despite this, I believe Stein and Lipps’ accounts of the empathic process to be more alike than one might initially suppose given Stein’s, “uncharitable reading of Lipps.”²⁹ While it is true that Lipps claims empathy leads to a complete identification between the empathiser and the empathee, we need not understand this statement so literally. Karsten R. Stueber insists that:

this does not imply that empathy leads to losing oneself in a different reality or, still less, to acting according to that perspective on reality. In an important sense, I know perfectly well that the anger that I experience in observing another angry person [...] is not my anger [...] the anger I experience in empathy lacks all of its motivating force. Similarly, in identifying with the movements of an acrobat on a rope high above the ground [...] I “know” that I myself am not high above the ground.³⁰

Indeed, despite Stein’s harsh reading of Lipps’ empathic theory, his, “use of the identification terminology in order to explicate the phenomenon of empathy does not signify advocacy of a complete loss of the self in its object.”³¹ Stueber argues that Lipps’ insistence on the identification between the two egos was instead a manner of rejecting theories such as John Stuart Mill’s inference from analogy, which held that in empathy we simply, “infer that the other person is in a particular mental state by observing his physical behavior and by knowing that such behavior is in our own case associated with a particular mental state, while assuming that the other person is in relevant aspects like me.”³² By arguing for an identification between the empathiser and empathee, Lipps

²⁷ Svenaesus, ‘Edith Stein’s Phenomenology of Sensual and Emotional Empathy,’ 753.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 753.

²⁹ Karsten R. Stueber, *Rediscovering Empathy: Agency, Folk Psychology, and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 8.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

³² *Ibid.*, 8.

dismissed such inference from analogy and instead posited empathy to be an act less intellectual and more spontaneous in nature.

This rejection of empathy as an intellectual act is also present in Stein; empathy, for her, is much more immediate and instinctive than any inferential theory could allow. This is evident in both Stein and Lipps' discussion of 'tendencies.' Stein speaks of a 'tendency to fulfilment' that is not dissimilar to Lipps' notions of human tendencies toward imitation and externalisation. Lipps holds that when I look at another individual, I have an instinctive tendency to imitate their gestures, whether physically or merely mentally. This elicits the gesture's corresponding emotion in me, which, due to an instinct of externalisation, I then express through my own gestures. My emotional gestures therefore become not merely a result of the other's feelings, but an expression of my very own mental state. Lipps insists that these tendencies are not to be understood as conscious volitional activities, but rather instinctive or blind impulsive activities [Triebtätigkeit].³³ Similarly, Stein claims that in viewing the other, I place myself in their position in a moment of 'as-if' and carry out their movements with them. In my recognition of another lived body, I have an immediate tendency toward the explication or fulfilment of its fields of sensation. This is evident in her description of observing someone's hand resting on a table:

The hand resting on the table does not lie there like the book beside it. It 'presses' against the table more or less strongly [...] and I 'see' these sensations of pressure [...] in a con-primordial way. If I follow out the tendencies to fulfilment with this 'co-comprehension', my hand is moved (not in reality, but 'as if') to the place of the foreign one. It is moved into it and occupies its position and attitude, now feeling its sensations, though not primordially and not as being its own.³⁴

Her claim that in such empathic experiences one's hand occupies the 'position and attitude' of the hand of the other may well be interpreted as an explication of a kind of mimetic empathy. Through the mental imitation of the other's gestures, I am able to attain a greater understanding of the other's feeling, perhaps even a fulfilling explication.

However, the two theories diverge crucially in their comprehension of the relationship between feelings and expression. Both Lipps and Stein hold that feeling by

³³ Theodor Lipps, 'The Knowledge of Other Egos,' ed. Timothy A. Burns, trans. Marco Cavallaro, *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 16 (2018): 278.

³⁴ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 58.

necessity ‘terminates’ in some form of expression, that “feeling by its nature demands expression.”³⁵ But Lipps’ claim is significantly stronger. He writes that, “[a]s I produce this gesture, I also exercise the corresponding activity, then this activity is, at its core, one and the same thing as the emotion [Affekt], i.e., it is nothing other than a moment of the emotion itself.”³⁶ Here he suggests a total identification of the feeling with the gesture, so much so that a carrying out of the gesture is in itself an experiencing of the feeling. In contrast, Stein takes on a more nuanced position. For her, what Lipps describes is merely the appearance of the feeling’s physical accompaniment, a product of the intertwining of the body and the psyche. Physical accompaniment of this kind functions solely on the surface-level; it affords us only the identification of the other’s feeling but not the manner in which the feeling is actually lived through by the other. She subsequently introduces a distinction between a feeling’s mere physical accompaniment and its expression. Feeling not only terminates in expression but releases an expression out of itself. There is no causal relation or simultaneity at play here, as is the case in physical accompaniment. Rather, “[f]eeling in its pure essence is not something complete in itself. As it were, it is loaded with an energy which must be unloaded.”³⁷ Importantly, such unloading need not always be directed outwardly; it may take the form of volition, action, bodily expression, or even reflection.

A consequence of this distinction between expression and physical accompaniment is that gestural imitation can no longer, as Lipps would have us believe, lead us to an accurate experience of the other’s psychic state. It can allow us to experience a form of the other’s feeling alongside them but will never reveal to us the feeling’s terminating expression, thus leaving the totality of the feeling inaccessible. That being so, imitation cannot bridge the gap between self and other in such a way that we are able to take on the other’s intentional object as our own.

Fulfilment through Imagination

It is also possible to utilise the notion of imagination as an alternative interpretation of Stein’s empathic projection. Michela Summa argues that, “besides perception, imaginative perspectival shift plays a constitutive role in empathic

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁶ Lipps, ‘The Knowledge of Other Egos,’ 279.

³⁷ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 48.

experience.”³⁸ He holds a perspectival shift of sorts to be possible in this grade as the shift in which one takes on the other’s intentional object implies, “a perspectival shift based on ‘as if’ consciousness or intuitive presentification.”³⁹ The movement required for empathic fulfilment can be understood as involving a form of imagination, “here understood not as pictorial, but rather as consciousness constituting possibilities.”⁴⁰ This imaginative constituting of possibilities consists of me figuring out what the other’s intentional object of feeling might be like by, “simulat[ing] my seeing of the sides of the objects in an as-if modality.”⁴¹ I do not simply try to imagine what the other is seeing from my own position, but rather attempt to discover both what and how the other is seeing, as if I were in their position. I imaginatively ‘follow a feeling through’ towards its possible unloaded expressions so that I might reach a true representation not only of the empee’s feeling but the manner in which that feeling releases an expression out of itself. This enables us to resolve the problems encountered in our conceiving of empathic projection as a kind of imitation; I can reach a fulfilling explication of the foreign feeling as I am able to see that feeling all the way through to its completing expression.

Conclusion

In our initial characterisation of empathic acts, we saw that they lie somewhere between presentational acts such as outer perception, and representational acts like expectation, memory, and imagination. This is because while the object of my empathic act is bodily present before me, my experience of the other’s mental state can never be a primordial one. Acts of empathy are thus primordial as experience but non-primordial in content. Furthermore, empathy is to be understood as a process comprised of three grades, allowing us to move through them towards higher levels of empathic accomplishment. In the first of these grades the empathic act is one of presentation, and in the second a representational act takes place.

An investigation of the first of these empathic grades also revealed that two distinct steps take place within the first modality, namely the emergence of the lived body and the emergence of the experience. This allows us to account for instances in which

³⁸ Summa, ‘Empathy and Anti-Empathy,’ 89.

³⁹ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 89.

⁴¹ Ibid., 99.

one might recognise another lived body and its (indeterminate) fields of sensation, but not succeed in identifying any particular feeling on the part of the other.

The only manner of bringing these foreign fields of sensation to givenness is either through their apperception or through representational intuition. But a mere apperception of another's fields of sensation leaves no possibility for fulfilment. A fulfilling explication of these foreign fields requires a perspectival shift, by which I may see my intentional object from a different point of view. Stein's notion of empathic projection is the only possible source of this kind of turn, as it enables me to take on the empathee's intentional object by taking up their position as opposed to my own.

Empathic projection, then, can be interpreted as being carried out through an act of imitation, or perhaps through an imaginative act. While an imitation of the other's gestures may seem an appropriate manner of taking up their perspective, the absence of a causal relation between feeling and expression eliminates this as a possibility. Empathic projection through imagination thus presents itself as the only viable solution to the problem of empathic fulfilment. By imaginatively constituting the possible expressions a feeling may unload, I am able to take up the other's position, allowing me to not only identify the foreign feeling and its object, but really live that feeling through, to imaginatively see it through to its completing expression.

In sum, Stein's theory of empathy allows us to account for our experience of others, from our most basic, instinctive recognition of foreign egos, to the appraisal of others' particular feelings, all the way to the fulfilling explication of the other's mental state by means of empathic projection as an imaginative act.

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