

2 Empathy and Intersubjectivity

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THIS ESSAY HAS TWO PURPOSES. The first is to explore the relationship between empathy and intersubjectivity. The second is to explore, within the bounds of intersubjectivity, the way in which empathy entails a “double representation” (and what this means).

The assertion of the first part of this essay is the strong one that no human interconnection would exist at all without the empathic function, in which one individual apprehends, is receptive to, the feelings, the emotional life, of another. Here “intersubjectivity” is understood to mean our interrelated being together with one another in the interhuman world of regard for and sensitivity to the feelings of other persons. We shall discover that the interrelation between empathy and intersubjectivity is twofold. First, a path will be traced from intersubjectivity to empathy, in which empathy will be exhibited as the functional foundation of human intersubjectivity. Then, the return route will be traced. Moving from empathy to intersubjectivity, empathy will be considered as a means or method of reestablishing or instituting contact with another individual when we have strayed into the realms that are experience-distant from those of the other.

In fulfilling the second purpose of this piece, we shall have an opportunity to consider the role of vicarious experience in the functioning of empathy. We shall also explore the distinction between empathy and emotional contagion, on the one hand, and the relation with interpretation (in the form of analogy), on the other hand.

What “intersubjectivity” is may require further clarification. In general terms, it represents an allusion to a philosophical tradition

devoted to exploring the many meanings of the relationship between self and other, ego and alter ego, individual and community. The phenomenology of the philosopher Edmund Husserl makes the constitution of intersubjectivity its goal in the *Cartesian Meditations* (1929). Husserl was accused of solipsism—the absolute isolation, aloneness, of the ego and its inability to escape the narrow bounds of its own experience. This objection is answered by explicating the meaning of “the other” and arguing that it cannot be eliminated. The other always survives the attempts at exclusion (1929, pp. 98–99). It continues to stand as a reminder that what is supposedly uniquely one’s own already includes element of otherness. Without the existence of the other to serve as a foil for one’s own reflection, awareness of the self is impossible. In short, what the term “intersubjectivity” wants to teach us is that not only is the “I” a part of the “we,” but also the converse—the “we” is a component of the “I.” Not only does the individual belong to the community but the community is an aspect of, is functionally represented within, the individual.

Although the paths of Husserl and Freud never crossed (their lives followed parallel, nonintersecting trajectories), they were both in a similar position with regard to the word “empathy” itself. Neither of them could use the word in the full sense of interhuman understanding with which we use it today for a specific reason. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the discussion of empathy was dominated by Theodor Lipps’ *Aesthetik* (1903), in which the word “empathy” (*Einfühlung*) coincides exactly with what we now call “projection.” Lipps was under attack by both the phenomenologist Max Scheler (1913), as well as Husserl’s student Edith Stein (1917), and Husserl may well have shown good sense in distancing himself from an association with Lipps’ “wild” use of empathy. Of course, scholarly evidence is now available that several books authored by Lipps were in Freud’s library (Trosman and Simmons, 1973; Wolf, 1976). For example, Freud footnotes Lipps’ *Komik und Humor* (1989) in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905). But Freud could not apply the word “empathy” directly in discussing his clinical technique without evoking allusions to Lipps’ metaphysical psychology of beauty. Naturally, these allusions are lost on us today, though they would be immediate to Freud’s contemporaries. Hence the necessity for making at least a gesture at putting the discussion in its historical perspective.

Turning now from the past to the present, in canvassing today’s relatively recent psychoanalytic literature on empathy, we find that many accounts of empathy incorporate a circular or spiraling movement. Examples of this include alternating participation and detach-

ment (Greenson, 1960, p. 420), introjection and projection (Fliess, 1942, p. 214), sharing and individuation (Sawyer, 1974, p. 46), oscillation between primary-process thinking and adult integration (Betelheim, 1974, p. 417), as well as introspection of oneself and resonance with the other (Kohut, 1959, 1977). Although the details of each of these various accounts of empathy do indeed diverge (see Basch [1983] for a more complete bibliography), the very form of circularity is itself worthy of reflection. Why does the application of empathy take this form?

One possible answer is that as a form of human understanding empathy has the form of the “hermeneutic circle.” The circularity—which is arguably not of a vicious but rather of a productive kind—occurs because the expressions of human life in question are composites consisting of many aspects that take their meaning from the whole of which they are a part and, in turn, lend meaning to that whole. Thus, the expressive actions and behavior of an individual become fully meaningful only when located in the context of his (or her) life situation. But the individual’s life is itself a composite of these expressive actions. The interrelation between the part and whole forms a circular network of mutually illuminating features. The oscillation between features that is so characteristic of many accounts of empathy may well turn out to be the shadow cast by the hermeneutic circle upon empathy.

Someone may well object that introducing the hermeneutic circle in an account of empathy is explaining the obscure by the more obscure. Nevertheless, the risk must be incurred, because the payoff is correspondingly great. What the hermeneutic circle teaches us is that human understanding operates by making many passes at the same phenomenon, gleaning something more and deepening appreciation with each pass. As a theory of interpretation, the paradigm for hermeneutics is a written text in which the words and sentences give meaning to the entire paragraph and are, in turn, informed by their location in the context of paragraph, chapter, book. But hermeneutics can also be extended to the understanding of nonwritten expressions of psychic life—symbolic action of all kinds. In every case the aim of hermeneutics is to clarify misunderstanding and find meaning amid apparent absurdity. And that is also the goal in seeking to understand a dream text, neurotic symptom, or cultural malaise. Insofar as hermeneutics is a method of clarifying misunderstandings, empathy is a hermeneutically relevant skill.

Now, in order to guard against misunderstanding of what follows, a number of crucial distinctions need to be kept in mind. Laying out

these distinctions constitutes the first step in our exploration of the interrelation between empathy and intersubjectivity.

First, a crucial distinction can be made between the occurrence of empathy on some particular, concrete occasion (as when I am listening to this individual person, Philip) and empathy as a general interhuman competence, a functional capacity attributable in principle to all humans (even though it may fail on some occasion in someone). Note that this distinction parallels that between practice and theory—between the clinical application of empathy to further the understanding of an individual and the deployment of empathy as a metapsychological concept constituting a component of the structure of intersubjectivity. In theoretical reflections, the path often leads from intersubjectivity to empathy as a competence or capacity, whereas in practical applications the direction is reversed and the activation of empathy leads to the establishment or enhancement of specific intersubjective connections.

Second, reasons are available for carefully distinguishing between empathy as a form of receptivity ("empathic receptivity") and empathy as a form of understanding ("empathic understanding"). Expressions involving "resonance," "sensitivity," "awareness," special attitudes of listening (with the "third ear"), and more colloquially "vibrations," all highlight empathy as receptivity. For example, when the dimension of *vicarious* experience in empathy is stressed as "vicarious introspection" (Kohut, 1959, 1977), then empathy is being regarded as a form of receptivity. But when the stress is placed on the further processing of whatever is apprehended—as in building a "working model" of the analysand (Greenson, 1960)—then empathy is being elaborated as a form of understanding. The aspect of receptivity often predominates in practical settings, whereas understanding comes to the fore when we step back and adopt a more theoretical perspective. Nevertheless, warrant is available for asserting that the full development of empathy as a way of gaining knowledge of another individual must involve both receptivity and understanding. As Kant (from whom this distinction is borrowed) pointed out, receptivity without understanding is blind, whereas understanding without receptivity is empty (1781–1787, p. 93). In the first instance, empathy is "out of control" and degenerates into merger; in the second, empathy is inhibited and is abstracted into pure intellectualization. The interrelation of these two phases of the empathic function is what makes possible the balanced application of accurate empathy.

Third, a distinction can be made between empathy and other methods of gaining knowledge of what another person is feeling. This dis-

inction helps us to be cautious, to remember that empathy does not exist in a vacuum. Let us not forget that we may also come to know what another person feels by means of logical inference from behavioral clues or because the other directly articulates his feelings in verbal expression. Cross-checking the accuracy of one's empathy is possible on many specific occasions precisely by mobilizing other parallel but different means of access to the emotional life of other persons. For example, I can ground a statement such as "He is enjoying an apple," not only in vicarious feelings of enjoyment (that emerge in me as I watch him consume the fruit with delight), but also in information communicated verbally to me by the other ("That was really a great apple!"). Indeed, in such a simple case as this, no empathy may be required to know what the other is feeling. Similarly, in an instance of violent discharge of anger or fear, the overt display of emotion is so gross as to obviate the need for the fine discriminations of feeling provided by empathy. At the risk of rhetorical exaggeration: when someone directs a violent stream of verbal abuse at me, no empathy is required to see that this person is enraged—virtual insensitivity will suffice. On the other hand, instances when someone is ambivalent, when someone experiences "mixed feelings," or when one feeling masks or distorts another provide those cases in which our empathy is most powerfully mobilized and is likely to be indispensable for arriving at an understanding of and with the other. Although no one method is guaranteed in itself to be infallible (for human knowledge is always subject to revision and improvement), the reciprocity of these different ways of access to another's feelings makes possible a direct answer to those kinds of skepticism that assert that understanding other persons is just a subtle form of projection: instances are available in which an individual recognizes that his experience was occasioned by being empathically receptive to the feelings of another.

In empathy, the receptivity being sought and applied is not absolute or infallible. The possibility of misunderstanding is a part of the risk of the application of empathic receptivity. In other words, saying that I am empathically receptive to another person does not even make sense unless I may also be closed-off, misunderstand the other, and go astray. Errors and distortions in communication—misunderstandings—emerge simultaneously with the successful exercise of empathy in an intersubjective context. Indeed, only in relation to these misfirings of empathic receptivity is the correct application of empathy intelligible. Empathy is no panacea for human limitations; it does not dispense with the fact that we are finite creatures subject to error. But it may represent an antidote in particular circumstances to misunderstand-

ing, for the understanding being sought through empathic receptivity is that of one finite human being in relation to another.

From Intersubjectivity to Empathy

Now, in order to trace the path from intersubjectivity to its foundation in empathy, I want to limit the scope of the discussion by taking off from a particular text. This text is closely related to the theme of this essay and, at least indirectly, occasioned it. As far as I know, this text has received no attention in the existing literature, perhaps because its philosophical implications have not been appreciated. The passage, from Kohut's *The Restoration of the Self* (1977), is:

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, and thus of a psychology of complex mental states, is unthinkable without our ability to know via vicarious introspection—my explanation of empathy . . . —what the inner life of man is, what we ourselves and what others think and feel [p. 306].

Coming toward the end of *The Restoration of the Self*, this statement might mistakenly be taken as simply rhetorical or inspirational (though it may be these also). This statement, however, should be taken at face-value. When we do so, we find it to be astonishing. It is eminently worthy of reflection (though such reflection will imply a confrontation with and qualification of what is meant by "vicarious introspection"). What is meant by the statement that the very idea of man's mental life—what we ourselves and others think and feel—is "unthinkable" without the ability to know by means of empathy?

Let us consider an analogy. In order to know some phenomenon I must be capable of being affected by it. Musical sounds are a constituent of my experience and understanding because of my capacity for hearing. Even if on some occasion my hearing breaks down or is destroyed, the concept of "musical sound" still makes sense. It is still thinkable, conceivable, so long as we admit the intelligibility of the capacity for hearing. We may indeed debate the origin, quality, or meaning of some configuration of sounds. We may marshal other empirical tests, authorities, or perspectives to scrutinize some sounds. But we agree about the possibility of agreement, even if we never arrive at agreement in this particular case. However, in a universe without hearing as a general capacity, in a universe without organisms sensitive to, receptive to, capable of apprehending, sounds, neither

music nor noise is even thinkable. We are no longer capable of conceiving of them, much less understanding or knowing them.

A parallel consideration applies to empathy. As Kohut's remark suggests, without empathy, knowledge of the mental life of man is unthinkable. (Note how this is immediately qualified in an intersubjective direction by invoking "what we ourselves and what others think and feel.") This is because empathy, as a general interhuman competence, makes this inner life intelligible and meaningful by constituting it as a field of study in the first place. Thus, Kohut writes: "Empathy does indeed in essence define the *field* of our observations" (1977, p. 306). Here the phenomena (feelings, emotions, thoughts) are dependent on that function which makes possible our access to them. Empathy is that function on the basis of which the experiences studied by depth psychology are opened up and constituted as knowable. Because empathy is that without which the constitution of our psychological life does not even make sense, it is the condition of possibility of that life.

Now let's explicitly shift this consideration in the direction of intersubjectivity. Empathy is the function through which intersubjectivity makes sense, insofar as without empathy we would not even be able to conceive of human beings as capable of expressing and being receptive to expressions of feelings. An intersubjective field of experiences in which feelings are expressed and receptively apprehended, but which is completely lacking in empathy, would be a contradiction in terms. Empathy is the organizing principle on the basis of which these experiences are made accessible. Granted that we do have these experiences of expressing and being affected by others' feelings, of becoming aware that the feelings of another have an impact on our own, we may ask: How is this possible? We find that it is necessary to posit some capacity or competence—let us call it "empathy"—upon pain of contradiction if we refuse to so posit it. A world with expressed and receptively experienced emotions, but without empathy, would be an absurdity in the strict sense. It would be a world of musicians without hearing—the frantic movement of bows across violin strings and fingers on ivory keys would be in vain for neither the musicians nor the listeners would in principle be capable of hearing the music. Similarly, without the capacity to empathize with the feelings of another, we would just be bodies located physically in space alongside one another—no interhuman connection would exist at all.

This line of reasoning, which Kant called a "transcendental argument" (1781–1787, pp. 592, 624), provides a principle that answers a question of the form: Granted that we have certain experiences, what must the constitution of our mental functions be like in order to account for the very possibility of such experiences? In this case, our

contagion" or toward the boundary between empathy and interpretation. If empathy is to escape the arbitrary caprice of conflicting intuitions, then it must be related to the act of interpretation. This mutual interrelation of empathic receptivity and interpretation constitutes a kind of "hermeneutic circle," in which both components are needed to constitute interhuman knowledge in the full sense. Empathy most authentically becomes a mode of understanding as it is transformed into and communicated as an interpretation. In what follows, different points at which the hermeneutic circle of empathy can be entered will be considered. Insofar as the goal at each of these points is the recovery or establishment of interhuman understanding, we can legitimately be said to be reversing the direction of our discussion and proceeding back from empathy to intersubjectivity.

Once the fates of empathy and introspection are linked—as in defining empathy as "vicarious introspection"—finding an instance of one without the other is virtually impossible. Thus, introspection implies that one is empathizing with oneself; and empathy implies introspecting the feelings and experiences of another as these vicariously emerge in one's own subjectivity. Here we ought to append Olden's (1956) significant reminder that our capacity for empathy with children is often a function of our feelings for our own fate as children. This rule is easily generalizable, and indicates the inevitable intermeshing of introspective efforts at self-understanding and the understanding of others through empathy.

Saying what "vicarious introspection" is *not* is relatively easy. It is not knowledge by direct acquaintance with another's sensations. Nor is it any kind of intellectual intuition. No privileged, direct (telepathic) access to another's fantasy life is entailed.

In vicarious introspection one is not introspecting the feelings, emotions, sensations, or experiences of the other at all. Rather, one is introspecting a vicarious feeling aroused in oneself by the other's expression of feeling. Through introspection one comes to realize that this feeling is not an endogenous mood or affect, arising from purely inner processes. Rather, it is a vicarious feeling, a representation of another's feeling that is a function of being receptive to another's self-expression. But I myself, not the other, am the object of introspection.

In defining "empathy" as "vicarious introspection," misplacement of the stress may mistakenly suggest that empathizing consists in directly introspecting another's inner life. But surely this goes too far, and leads to absurd consequences. Rather, empathy consists in introspecting one's own vicarious experience of another's experience, and thus establishing a connection between self and other through this vicarious dimension of experience.

experience in encountering other individuals indicates that we are affected by their feelings and that our feelings (in turn) affect them. What is being suggested is that at some point there must be a functioning capacity for being receptive to the feelings of others in order for the recognition, identification, and further understanding of feelings in another to be "thinkable," conceivable in any sense. Empathy, then, is just such a condition of possibility for describing others (and by implication ourselves) as capable of being affected by feelings.

Here the term "transcendental," which may be intimidating at first, requires some unpacking. It can be paraphrased as "not capable of being contradicted by experience, but nevertheless relating to experience and providing the framework or structure within which that experience becomes meaningful." Empathy is what makes possible the experience of affecting and being affected by the feelings of another person. This experience, in turn, is the basis on which we are subsequently justified in positing the existence of the capacity for empathy. But in this experience empathy is itself presupposed, for without empathy the experience itself could not occur. Thus, the argument has the force of logic. It is concerned with what is "thinkable," "conceivable," without contradiction. Yet it is more than mere logic, for it concerns the realm of experience. Empathy is that on the ground of which being affected by the feelings of others is constituted as a realm of accessible experiences in the first place.

What Kohut has in fact given in the cited passage is an example of such a "transcendental argument," although in an implicit and abbreviated form. In tracing a path from intersubjectivity to empathy, in which empathy is the presupposition of intersubjectivity, empathy becomes a component in a kind of metapsychological equation. "Empathy" is being used as a component in theory building. Invoking empathy as an interhuman competence helps to make understandable the experiences we do in fact have. It makes intelligible how we are able to be receptive to the feelings of others. But, at the risk of paradox, how do we explain this principle of understanding?

From Empathy to Intersubjectivity

Now we must trace the return route from empathy to intersubjectivity, and examine the role of "vicarious experience" in the functioning of empathy, with particular reference to Kohut's definition of empathy as "vicarious introspection." From this point the discussion can proceed toward the boundary between empathy and "emotional

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A further misunderstanding about the nature of the introspection in question needs to be clarified and avoided. Anyone who thinks that introspection involves concentrating attention on the mental contents (affects, volitions, cognitions) of consciousness will be disappointed and soon become disillusioned with the prospect of using an introspective technique in order to make contact with another person. The harder one concentrates, the more elusive and one-sided are the results. Not only does the person find answers only to questions already posed, but he even suggests the answers to himself. This leads to much of the disrepute that has plagued introspection. Furthermore, memories, which are often the content of introspection, behave in a parallel manner. That is, recollections are rarely disclosed by intense concentration. A forgotten name or foreign word may be on the "tip of the tongue." But, typically, exerting extra effort, trying harder, will get one nowhere. If, however, one is distracted by something for a period of time, then all at once the name or word may pop into one's mind.

The distinction between the empathic-introspective attitude and one of concentrated attention is documented by Freud in his "Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psychoanalysis" (1912). Both empathy and introspection are amalgamated in this text. The physician is listening with empathic receptivity to the other, and he is also introspectively receptive to himself:

The technique, however, is a very simple one. . . . It rejects the use of any special expedient (even that of taking notes). It consists simply in not directing one's notice to anything in particular and in maintaining the same "evenly-suspended attention" (as I have called it) in the face of all that one hears. In this way we spare ourselves a strain on our attention which could not in any case be kept up for several hours daily, and we avoid a danger which is inseparable from the exercise of deliberate attention. For as soon as anyone deliberately concentrates his attention to a certain degree, he begins to select from the material before him; one point will be fixed in his mind with particular clearness and some other will be correspondingly disregarded, and in making this selection he will be following his expectations and inclinations. This, however, is precisely what must not be done. In making the selection, if he follows his expectations he is in danger of never finding anything but what he already knows; and if he follows his inclinations he will certainly falsify what he may perceive. It must not be forgotten that the things one hears are for the most part things whose meaning is only recognized later on (p. 111).

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"Evenly hovering attention . . . is the analyst's active empathic response to the analysand's free associations" (1977, p. 251). Saying that empathy is an extension of introspection does not mean that the analyst extends his introspective monitoring of his own mind to encompass the consciousness of the other. Nor is his introspective scanning of his own consciousness reducible to the spontaneous, unstudied talk characteristic of free associating. Rather, an introspective phase emerges from his empathic receptivity, in which he becomes aware that he is open to the other.

However, in order to attain "empathic receptivity" in the full sense, using Freud's vocabulary, something must be added to "evenly hovering attention." This something is alluded to by Freud as "induced vibrations." This way of talking may help us to isolate the dimension of empathic receptivity. The doctor:

. . . must bend his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the emerging unconscious of the patient, be as the receiver of the telephone to the disc. As the receiver transmits the electric vibrations induced by the sound-waves back again into sound-waves, so is the physician's unconscious mind able to reconstruct the patient's unconscious, which has directed his associations, from the communications derived from it [Freud, 1912, pp. 115-116].

That Freud juxtaposes the two aspects of receptivity and reconstruction (interpretation) in this text is no accident. The intertwining of "receptive organ" and "receiver" with the task of reconstructing "the patient's unconscious" highlights the hybrid nature of empathy. By itself empathy is rather like a belt that is too small, and, hence, it must stretch elastically to include everything that is a part of the experience of empathy. The burden of explicating this complexity can be effectively unloaded by keeping in mind the distinction made earlier between receptivity and understanding.

Now the discussion can proceed in two directions. It can proceed toward the boundary between empathy and "emotional contagion" (or "emotional infection") or toward the boundary between empathy and interpretation. We shall consider in which specific ways empathy is related to each of these without, however, being reducible to either of them alone. Let us trace both of these trajectories in turn.

Empathy and Emotional Contagion

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point in our examination of these two distinct phenomena, we discover that an area of overlap (however limited it may be) does in fact exist, that does *not* mean that the two phenomena were identified with one another or confused. Indeed, the best available means to prevent confusion is to give a clear account of the distinction between them. Such an account must also include a statement on why it is possible for some people to distort empathy into mere emotional contagion. This will serve the valuable purpose of answering those critics who try to dismiss empathy by first reducing it to a form of emotional contagion.

Thus, reminders can be assembled from a variety of contexts which can help to delimit a natural or lower boundary to empathy. The way enthusiasm, courage, fear, or panic is communicated through the members of a crowd received the attention of early sociologists (see Freud, 1921). Laughing and crying are also often spoken of as "catching." Children experience uncontrollable seizures of both the latter in playing with friends or in being punished for some misdemeanor. Many adults also testify to such experiences in which mirth or grief are infectiously communicated between individuals. A similar instance of contagion (though not involving feelings in the narrow sense) occurs when the sight of extensive scar tissue on another person makes the viewer's skin tingle or wince, or when a friend's account of his trip to the dentist's office and the latter's detailed procedure arouses sympathetic pains (as they are called) in the listener as he follows the story. Nor is this mechanism restricted to those capable of self-reflection. Animals can be quite exquisitely sensitive to a person's feelings—as when a dog senses my underlying fear of him (in spite of my attempt to maintain a calm exterior visage) and continues to bark excitedly at the supposed intruder (thus, accurately assessing my emotional state, but not my motives).

Let me hasten to add that none of these instances is an example of empathy. The point, however, is that empathy involves something which is, in fact, involved in these cases of contagion, too.

In all of the foregoing cases, including that of empathy, an initial phase exists, in which one individual's feeling arouses what amounts to an "after-image" (to employ a visual expression) or perhaps an "echo" of the feeling in another individual. Note that "after-image" or "echo" refers to a representation of a feeling in an attenuated sense, which can best be unpacked by a careful examination of the term "vicarious." Words often contain valuable clues to the nature of the phenomena they distinguish in our experience. This is the case with "vicarious," for it is directly related to "vicar"—a substitute or deputy. Ordinary

usage is instructive on this point. "Vicarious authority" occurs when one person assumes the office of another. Contrasting "vicarious experience" with "firsthand experience" is meaningful, and distinguishing "vicarious" from "original" experience is what we in fact typically do. So-called ordinary language philosophy has documented instances when we do talk of "feeling another person's displeasure" or say "his anger could be felt" (Austin, 1946, pp. 374-375n). This segment of our experience is properly marked by the term "vicarious" (even in ordinary discourse). Attention to it may occasion the recognition that a legitimate sense exists in which a feeling in one person causes a representation of that (qualitatively) same feeling to emerge in another person.

In emotional contagion a representation of the other's feeling is aroused in the subject. That is all that happens. In the case of empathy, in addition to this first representation of the other's feeling, a second representation is mobilized. The subject becomes aware that the other's feeling is the source of his own. Thus, this second representation—which is indeed a representation of the *other*—is conjoined with the first.

This, then, is the crucial and irreducible difference between empathy and emotional contagion. Empathy involves a double representation. First, it involves a representation of another's feeling. (This is what empathy shares with emotional contagion.) Second, it entails a representation of the other as such as the source of the first representation. (This is what is lacking in emotional contagion.) Thus, what differentiates empathy from contagion is the emergence, the distinguishing of, a representation of the other as the object as well as the cause of what is being felt.

Warrant is available for saying that this double representation in empathy corresponds to the above-cited distinction between receiving and understanding. In finding a representation of another's feeling aroused in myself, I am displaying a capacity to be receptive to the other's expression of feeling. In conjoining this first representation (of my vicarious experience) with the representation of the other as such (as the source of my feeling), I am mobilizing my understanding in the interest of what amounts to a simple interpretation. The interpretation asserts that my feeling is not of endogenous origin, does not come from me alone, but originates with the other and, by implication, with my interaction with him. It is a function of our situation and intersubjectivity. Further negotiation with the other person about the accuracy of this interpretation then becomes possible according to the

standard criteria laid down in "Constructions in Analysis" (Freud, 1937).

Empathy and Interpretation

In shifting the emphasis of the discussion from empathic receptivity to empathic understanding, we approach the boundary between empathy and interpretation. In this sense, interpretation is a derivative mode of understanding, a specific application of interhuman understanding. In particular, the way in which the proper interpretation can release blocked empathy and institute or reestablish the intersubjective connection between self and other indicates a tendency within empathy itself to unfold in the direction of intersubjective communicability. Further, when, in empathy, a representation of the other is amalgamated with vicarious experience, our understanding of the relation between self and other is broadened. Indeed, a genuine sense is available in which empathy delivers back to us an enriched self.

In order to engage this issue—how interpretation can release blocked empathy—I propose to narrow the scope of the discussion and look at one particular form of interpretation, that provided by the example of "analogy." Analogy occurs in the examples cited by Freud in support of his empathically based constructions. When Freud writes that "the patient answers with an association which contains something similar or analogous to the subject-matter of the construction" (1937, p. 262), an analogy is being drawn between an interpretation and a response. The analogy here is between the analyst's interpretation (construction) and the analysand's report of some memory or experience. In other instances, talking of an "analog model" is more accurate. For example, when Greenerson experienced that he was "out of touch" with one of his patients—when he was in doubt about why she should start to cry at that point in her talking about a party (1960, p. 421)—he mobilized a working model of the patient, which he shifted into the foreground of his listening. Such a working model is, of course, a representation of the other.

Empathy often does not immediately succeed in opening up channels of intersubjective communication. One encounters limits to one's capacity for vicarious feeling with individuals whose experiences are either actually remote from one's own or related in an idiosyncratic and cryptic way. In these instances, an analogy can initiate the activity of empathic receptivity and guide it from start to finish. That is, an analogy can help to guide our empathic receptivity back to concrete

experience when, as frequently happens, we have been forced into experience-distant domains.

When, in listening to another, I find an experience analogous to what the other is recounting spontaneously emerging in my own recollection, then this embedded analogy is the nucleus of a spontaneously generated interpretation. The analogy provides a guide for seeking the experience of the other, who would otherwise be lost to my empathic receptivity. Let us call this an "analogical recollection," for what I am experientially recalling is a candidate for being regarded as an analogy to the other's experience.

The case of fantasy adds a further nuance to this discussion. When, in imagination, I find aspects of the other in myself (in answer to the question: How are we alike?), or of myself in the other (in answer to the question: How is he like me?), then this, too, becomes a candidate for being regarded as an analogy with the other's experience. Let us call this "analogical apperception," for "apperception" refers to the simultaneous perception of self and other together.

Naturally, neither of these forms of analogy constitutes, in and of itself, a complete interpretation. But both are important as points of emergence of interpretation from experience. It is as if a tendency in receptivity were striving in the direction of interpretation. When, in listening to someone recount a childhood preoccupation, I am suddenly paired with him through the arousal of an analogous recollection or fantasy of my own, then what would otherwise be an anomalous experience-distant story is brought nearer to myself. The analogy provides a rule for seeking the experience of the other. The inchoate interpretation that occurs here in the specific form of a pairing of self and other in imagination or recollection is capable of guiding empathic receptivity back to experience when it has otherwise been blocked.

Insofar as empathy displays the form of a hermeneutic circle, it can be engaged at three levels or from three trajectories. First, when I experience a vicarious feeling, the possibility opens up that empathy can be directly grounded in the intersubjective communicability of affect. But when this communicability of feeling is blocked, then two other routes are available for arousing empathy. Through "analogical recollection," I can recall an experience similar to or resembling that of the speaker. Through "analogical apperception," I can have a fantasy in which some aspect of the other's experience is paired with my own. Although the first case seems to be the purest, in the sense that the empathy is spontaneous and not intellectually mediated, the other two cases provide legitimate points at which the hermeneutic circle of em-

pathic intersubjectivity can be entered. Of course, in neither of the latter two cases does analogy by itself constitute a form of empathy. Rather, analogy as a form of interpretation is mobilized in the interest of instituting or reestablishing an empathic connection (a vicarious experience) when, for whatever reason, empathetic receptivity has gone astray, into experience-distant domains, or has been inhibited.

Finally, this recognition of the interface between empathy and interpretation enables us to capture the grain of truth in those thinkers who have asserted that empathy is "imagining oneself in another's shoes" or that empathy is a deliberately constructed "thought experiment." My answer to them is that they are limited by their overemphasis on the intellectual operation involved at the expense of "empathic receptivity." This misplacement of stress is motivated by those situations in which a divergence of experiences between two individuals is given as a matter of fact. Then, one must rely on means other than vicarious experience. But the application of these means is in the interest of guiding understanding back to experience.

When I conceptually reverse perspective—when I put "myself in the other's shoes"—a concept is employed in the form of a representation of the other. A comparison occurs in which I may be imagined to be similar to or different from the other with respect to my initiatives, reactions, or dispositions. An intellectual comparison is occurring by means of a reversal of perspective from "here" to "there," from where I stand to where the other is. But so far only a single kind of representation is entailed. The "double representation" that is characteristic of empathy is lacking. In contrast to my earlier discussion, here the representation of the other is available, but the other's feeling is missing. Whereas previously empathy was in jeopardy of being lost in emotional contagion, the danger is now that empathy will be abstracted into a mere intellectual operation, a form of understanding without connection to experiential content.

Are we now in danger of having given an explanation of why empathy is impossible? Is empathy doomed to failure in either emotional contagion or overintellectualization? In order to appreciate why the answer is a definite "no," we must recall what was said earlier—namely, that the correct application of empathy makes sense only in relation to the possibility that our empathy can misfire, fail, go astray, or precipitate a misunderstanding. If I have succeeded in giving an account of the risks of failure of empathy, then by implication I have also succeeded in stating the requirements of a successful application of empathy. These may be summarized by invoking what I have called empathy's requirement of "double representation." The point, of

course, is that empathy requires both representations in order to completely close the hermeneutic circle. The circle can be broken at either point: a representation of the other by itself is a mere empty concept, whereas a vicarious experience in itself is a blind sensation without relational significance. (The first is unfulfilled by vicarious experience; the second lacks the guidance of a reference to the other.) Only when both come together—a vicarious experience as well as a representation of the other as the ground of this experience—do we complete the circle and attain empathy in the full sense.

Conclusion

Let us reflect anew on the ground covered by this essay as a whole. The second major part of this essay indicated how empathy is *possible* as a "double representation." It also showed the *actual* difficulties encountered in applying empathy as a middle way between emotional contagion and overintellectualization. (The use of analogy, as a derivative mode of interpretation, is limited to being a way of arousing blocked empathy, and is not a substitute for it.) In tracing the path from empathy to intersubjectivity, far from having unwittingly explained why empathy is impossible, we have shown why it is possible as well as why it is in actuality difficult to attain. (The latter result, in particular, corresponds to our experience and, at least indirectly, lends plausibility to the outcome.) These two results must now be conjoined with the first part of this paper, in which the corresponding path from intersubjectivity to empathy was traced. There it was indicated that if an account is to be given of those intersubjective experiences of communicating affects, of vicarious experiences, which we do in fact have, then just such a capacity as empathy must of *necessity* be presupposed. No doubt further reflection and investigation may result in enhancements and perhaps even corrections. But in this specific sense our discussion is complete, for we have encompassed empathy's possibility, actuality, and necessity. It is possible as a "double representation," actual as a vicarious experience mediated by a representation of the other, and necessary as the presupposition of human intersubjectivity as a whole.

In conclusion, one further reflection presents itself. Indeed, it is offered more as a personal conviction than as a presently provable truth. The understanding and application of empathy are worthwhile and valuable for many reasons. One of those reasons is that empathy provides us with an enriched self. This occurs in three ways. First, in

relation to other individuals regarded collectively as an intersubjective community, empathy is part of the foundation of that intersubjectivity. Here the self is enriched by belonging to a community of other individuals whose cultural tradition provides opportunities for innovation or conformity in making decisions about one's life. Second, in relation to particular individuals, empathy furnishes a way of access to the other person's emotional life and of disclosing how our lives overlap or diverge. Here the self is enriched by discovering the variety and multiplicity of experiences of which other individuals are capable. Third, in the relation of the self to itself, empathy entails an appreciation of how others are affected by oneself, how others regard oneself. This enriches the self by presenting possibilities for enhanced self-knowledge. Thus, the other is inevitably implicated in the self's own process of disclosure, so that the truth of Shakespeare's aphorism resonates with new meaning:

This above all, to thine own self be true
And it must follow as the night the day,
You cannot then be false to any other man.

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