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Experiential Other-Directness: To What Does It Amount?

ABSTRACT

Drawing upon contributions by Husserl, Stein, and other classic phenomenologists, some theorists in the field of social cognition have advanced the idea that we often have direct and experiential access to another person's mind. This claim challenges the assumption, widespread in Theory of Mind approaches to social cognition, that other minds are essentially hidden behind psychologically meaningless patterns of observable behaviour. In this paper, I discuss three models for articulating the phenomenological idea of an experiential other-directness and suggest the superiority of one of them.

KEYWORDS:

social cognition, phenomenology, empathy.

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I. Introduction

For decades, philosophical and scientific debates about the capabilities and mechanisms that allow us to understand and interact with others have taken place within the framework of the Theory of Mind paradigm (Goldman 2012). It has been an assumption of the models developed under this framework that interpersonal understanding is fundamentally a matter of mindreading, that is, of attributing mental states to others in order to explain and predict their behaviour. Consequently, a basic challenge for a theory of social cognition would be how to account for this ability. Theory-theory approaches maintain, roughly speaking, that mindreading relies on the possession of a relevant theory of mind, that is, a folk psychological knowledge on the basis of which we infer that another person is undergoing a certain mental state (Gopnik and Wellman 1995; Baron-Cohen 1995; Carruthers 1998). Simulation-theories typically claim that, instead of detached theorising, mindreading involves the production in ourselves, through first-person simulation routines, of pretend mental states that we ascribe to others (Gordon 1996; Goldman 1995, 2006).

A traditional assumption behind Theory of Mind approaches is that another person's mental states are essentially unobservable or unperceivable (Leslie 2004, 164; Goldman 2012, 402; Gopnik and Wellman 1995, 234). This assumption, which has been labelled the 'unobservability principle' (Krueger 2011, 1) and the 'hidden minds assumption' (Gallagher 2012, 188) is only rarely spelled out as such by Theory of Mind theorists, yet it remains operative in their accounts. Most importantly, it explains why mindreading is considered the default way in which we could make sense of others. Had we, at least in some cases, direct experience of other people's minds, we would not need to attribute to them mental states on the basis of observable behaviour initially deprived of any mental significance. However, the claim that we do not possess experiential access to other minds has been challenged by recent approaches to social cognition inspired by the phenomenological tradition. Drawing upon contributions by Husserl, Stein, and others, proponents of these approaches have defended the idea that in some specific but fundamental domains, such as the understanding of emotions and intentions, we often have direct and experiential access to another person's mind, even if this access is neither exhaustive nor identical to the access that the other has to the same mental states (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 181-187; Gallagher 2008; Zahavi 2011; Zahavi and Overgaard 2011; Krueger and Overgaard 2012). This line of thought is thus compatible with the important intuition that other mental lives are not accessible in the same sense in which we each have access to our own minds, but it does not construe this difference of access in terms of the lack or presence of direct experience. Additionally, some theorists working on the neuroscience of social cognition have also claimed that in the domains of the understanding of emotions and intentions, we have direct experiential access to other people's mentalities, emphasising the continuity of their pro-

posals with claims found in the phenomenological literature (Gallese 2011, 46; 2010, 86; 2007, 11; Iacoboni 2007, 317). If we have such direct access to other minds, there would be good reason to question the unobservability principle. By taking for granted that the asymmetry of access entails a lack of direct experience of another's mind, we might simply be dismissing something fundamental about how other people are experientially given to us and, therefore, neglecting a crucial component of a convincing account of social cognition. But is it at all plausible to claim that, at least in some cases, we have something like a direct and experiential access to the minds of others?

My aim in the following is to consider three models for understanding the phenomenological notion of experiential other-directness (henceforth, EOD) and to suggest the superiority of one of them. I will focus initially on the Hybrid Mind theory, according to which EOD amounts to literally perceiving certain proper parts of certain mental phenomena that straddle both internal and external operations (Krueger 2011; Krueger and Overgaard 2012) (Section II). Then, I will consider the Embodied Simulation account (Gallese 2010; Gallese and Sinigaglia 2011), which suggests that having direct understanding of another's emotions, sensations, and intentions involves the reuse of the same neural and cognitive resources that are activated when we undergo the same type of mental states ourselves (Section III). Finally, I will focus on the Empathy Model of EOD (Section IV). In this model, the distinctiveness of the direct experiential access we have to other minds ultimately requires us to recognise the involvement of a *sui generis* standard of directness, which differs from both perceptual object-directness and self-directness (see Stein 2010; Zahavi 2011).

II. Object-perception and the Hybrid Mind

In the first model of EOD that I will consider, the latter is understood as very similar to object-perception. In defending phenomenologically motivated accounts of social cognition, Joel Krueger has articulated the idea that “quite often, we have direct perceptual access to aspects of another's mentality. At its core, social cognition thus need not be a process that relies upon extra-perceptual cognitive mechanisms. Rather, we somehow directly *see* another's mental life, including their thoughts, emotions, intentions, etc., within our perception of their expressive behaviour” (2011, 150. Emphasis in the original). The strategy he pursues to defend this idea involves disambiguating the notion of expressive behaviour, which appears at crucial junctures in some of the phenomenological accounts of social cognition. Models of social cognition relying on the notion of mindreading set for themselves the task of explaining how we can make a leap from the psychologically meaningless behaviour that we would initially perceive to the ascription of mental features to others. This is

where the notion of expressive behaviour plays a crucial role as an alternative to the supposition that the perceptual input we initially receive from others is deprived of mental significance. Expressive behaviour, as some proponents of the phenomenological approaches put it, is “saturated with the meaning of the mind; it reveals the mind to us” (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 185). Because of this, the relationship between behaviour and mental phenomena “is stronger than that of a mere contingent causal connection, though weaker than that of identity” (*Ibid.*). Mental states are not conceived of as hidden causes responsible for what we see of the other, although it is possible that behaviour and mentality are dissociated from one another, for example, in cases of lying or suppression (*Ibid.*).

According to Krueger, the notion of expressive behaviour, so understood, remains haunted by an ambiguity (2011, 152). There would, he argues, be at least two ways of understanding this notion and trying to resolve the ambiguity. On the one hand, it is possible to understand the claim that behaviour is expressive of mental phenomena in the sense that the latter are experientially co-present when we see another’s behaviour. This view amounts to claiming that we indeed experience some of the other’s mental features but not as actually present to us. They are, rather, experientially co-present as we perceive the other’s behaviour, analogous to what happens in the perception of a solid and opaque external object. If, say, I have a book in front of me, I experience the whole book, its backside included, even if what I actually see of it is restricted to its front. Even if there is no sensory modality directly involved in my experience of the backside of the book, the latter is experientially co-present while the part of the book facing me is perceptually present. It seems misleading and counterintuitive to claim that my experience is merely of part of the book and not of the book itself.

Applied to expressive behaviour, this view suggests that another’s mental features are amodally co-present while the patterns of visible behaviour are present to us. This position is surely different from claiming that mental phenomena are invisible causes of visible behavioural patterns, and to this extent, it is a candidate for making sense of the idea that we have experiential access to other minds. As Krueger notes, however, this view does not seem to break completely with the unobservability principle. This is because, in the case of social cognition, amodal co-presence does not entail perceptibility. The situation is different in the case of object-perception. Even if I do not perceive the backside of the book, I can, at least in principle, turn the book over to see it. In the case of another’s mental states, this does not and cannot happen (*Ibid.*, 153). There is no sense, it seems, in which moving closer to or around the other will allow me to perceive his mental states from another angle since these are not perspectively given to me. There seems, then, to be an important

asymmetry between other-perception and object-perception in terms of the perceptibility of the co-presented mental features.

A second strategy for understanding the notion of expressive behaviour is in terms of constitution, rather than co-presence. This, Krueger suggests, is the most promising path to take. As Krueger writes, “taking expression in a constitutive sense involves the idea that certain bodily actions are expressive of mental phenomena in that they actually constitute proper parts of some mental phenomena” (*Ibid.*, 155). Understanding expression in a constitutive sense thus amounts to casting a new light on how we think about the structure of some mental states:

Some mental phenomena have a hybrid structure. They are states or processes that straddle both internal (neural) and external (extra-neural, gross bodily) operations, and are thus directly embodied within some patterns of expressive behavior. Accordingly, when we perceive behavior and expressive actions we –at least at times- perceive not expressions of dispositions but rather proper parts of mental phenomena. We literally see mind in action. (*Ibid.*, 156)

According to the Hybrid Mind proposal, EOD is to be accounted for in terms of our capacity to directly perceive certain proper parts of certain mental phenomena. What we would perceive are their “external (extra-neural, gross bodily) operations”. We can leave aside here considerations of the parts of the other’s mental state that we would not perceive (bearing in mind, however, that the internal and external parts would form “an integrated unity” (Krueger and Overgaard 2012, 256)), for all the strength of the argument, as a (partial) challenge to the unobservability principle hinges on what we would actually perceive of the mental state. The support brought in for this idea is diverse. I will not focus on it here but rather on the *prima facie* phenomenological plausibility of the account. Let us focus on the idea that if a mental state partially straddles “external operations”, these operations are therefore perceivable by someone else. To what does perceptibility amount in this case?

The notion of perception used here is what is typically called external perception, which – apart from being allegedly directed at certain observable parts of certain hybrid mental states – is also directed at trees, cars, and many other objects: all that is “available to the naked eye” (Krueger 2011, 165). It seems clear though that making the case in favour of the direct perception idea requires more than just claiming that, for instance, in seeing another’s gestures we would literally see the expressed emotion. We also require an account of how the gestures, or more generally, the visible parts of hybrid mental states are perceptually given to us. Confronting this question, there seem to be two possible paths to follow: either claim that those

visible parts are given in terms of presence and co-presence, as would be any other spatial objects, or affirm that they are not. If they were not given in such a way, the visible parts of the hybrid mental state would not have a spatial structure, and it would be mysterious to what their visibility actually amounted. On the other hand, if they were perceptually given in terms of presence and co-presence, it would seem that that the Hybrid Mind proposal could not avoid an implausible phenomenology.

The Hybrid Mind theory seems to take the second path. It assumes that visible parts of hybrid mental states are object-like features, spatio-temporal occurrences to which we would have access as we have access to external objects. Gestures, for instance, would be perceptually given like other spatio-temporal objects. Even if - taking into account a gesture's typically fluid character and the idea that it would be a visible part of a mental state - we refrained from calling a gesture a proper object, it would be an object-like visible part of a mental state. If this were so, however, it seems we should also think of our perceptual access to gestures in terms of presence and co-presence. Gestures need not be solid and opaque objects in order to match with the idea that they are spatio-temporal occurrences perspectively given for an observer, in correspondence with the sensorimotor capacities of the observer. And indeed, Krueger writes that:

There is a sense in which another's mental life can be disclosed in a manner analogous to my moving around or manipulating a tomato to bring its occluded back-side to perceptual presence. *If gestures are the material vehicles for some cognitive processes, it follows that I can utilize the same sensorimotor skills to access hidden or unattended aspects of these processes the same way I can [access? F.L.] hidden or unattended aspects of solid opaque objects like tomatoes and chairs* (2011, 163. My emphasis).¹

This passage is revealing in terms of the Hybrid Mind's commitment to an object-perceptual model of EOD. To be clear, the crucial point is not how often we utilise our sensorimotor skills to explore a gesture but, rather, that if gestures are regarded as visible parts of hybrid mental states, gestures then satisfy the antecedent of the conditional expressed at the end of the above passage. Thus, even if we normally do not move around to get a better view of another's gestures, the Hybrid Mind account allows us to do so in principle, for it holds gestures to have hidden or unattended aspects, analogous to those of tomatoes and chairs. I do not, however, think that this suggestion fits with an important intuition of the role played by gestures in interpersonal understanding. Indeed, they are not typically or in principle open to an object-like exploration, unless, of course, we have reasons for undertaking such a procedure. But one can say that a gesture has hidden or unattended aspects only

1. This observation is made by Krueger as a qualification to an objection previously made to the co-presence thesis. However, it has, in my view, far-reaching implications for the positive account of the Hybrid Mind proposal.

when it has stopped being a gesture and has become a thing of observation. As Max Scheler remarks:

If I adopt the approach of external perception, and rely upon the unities of appearance presented therein, they will enable me to form an impression of any part of the individual body, however small; but in any combination of such unities I shall never come upon the unity of a smile, an entreaty, a threatening gesture and so on. (2009, 263; see also Stein 2010, 14).

If we follow Scheler's suggestion, the unity of a smile as an expressive phenomenon cannot be broken down into the unities of appearance with which one can become acquainted through external perception. And if we further take into account that externally perceived unities of appearance are characterised by the duality of presence and co-presence, we can see that there is something potentially misleading in describing the experience of seeing a smile as an experience that can be grasped in terms of such duality. Gestures seem to lack the duality of the presented and co-presented aspects characteristic of external objects, and this is precisely what their expressive quality consists of. They lose this quality if, in a reifying move, we think of them even partially as things that we see. It thus seems that, in accounting for the idea of EOD, the Hybrid Mind proposal runs into the difficulty of an implausible phenomenology.

III. Self-directness and Embodied Simulation

An alternative means of spelling out the notion of EOD is to model it upon self-directness. The main intuition behind this line of thought is that, if we can ever be said to have direct experience of another's mentality, we have to start with the only mentality with which we are directly acquainted, namely our own. As de Vignemont has remarked, a recurrent claim in the literature on empathy and motor resonance is that these phenomena allow for direct access to other people's mental states (2010, 287). For some of these approaches, "they [empathy and motor resonance] are supposed to provide a *direct* access to others in the same way that we have a direct access to ourselves" (*Ibid.* Emphasis in the original). Some neuroscientific and simulation-based approaches to social cognition seem indeed to have assumed some version of a self-directness model while simultaneously claiming to challenge a number of suppositions of the Theory of Mind approaches, including the unobservability principle. In the following, I will focus briefly on the Embodied Simulation theory (henceforth, ES). Based on the neuroscience of mirror neurons, ES is a theoretical framework for understanding our ability to attribute intentions, emotions, and sensations to others, recognising at the same time that such mechanisms allow for direct experiential understanding of others in these domains (Gallese 2007, 3;

2010, 85; Gallese et al. 2004, 396).

Often drawing from the phenomenological tradition (Gallese 2011), proponents of ES have claimed that “the fundamental mechanism that allows us a direct experiential grasp of the mind of others is not conceptual reasoning but direct simulation of the observed events through the mirror mechanism” (Gallese et al. 2004, 396). The critical question, of course, is what, exactly, it would mean to have direct and experiential access to another’s mental state within the framework of ES. The so-called ‘mirror neurons’ are cells that are located in the ventral premotor cortex of monkeys and humans and that show the same pattern of activation when a goal-oriented action is executed by an individual and when it observes the same kind of action performed by another individual. The discovery of these neurons has been used to support the simulationist claim that there is an underlying simulation process at the root of our mindreading abilities, allowing us to run ‘as if’ mental states and project them onto others (Gallese and Goldman 1998). Subsequent experiments have shown that seeing someone else expressing an emotion (like disgust) or undergoing a sensation (like a touch sensation) recruits some of the same brain areas activated when one experiences the same kind of emotion or sensation oneself, even if other specific brain areas are activated in the case of one’s own emotion or sensation (see review in Gallese and Sinigaglia 2011, 3). These experiments testify to the activation of some sort of mirroring mechanism in the attributor’s neural resources during the attribution of emotions, sensations, and goal-directed actions to others.

Gallese and Sinigaglia have recently remarked that the concept of mental simulation “has been discussed by emphasizing two different but not mutually exclusive features: resemblance and reuse” (2011, 2). Resemblance is thought of as “a form of interpersonal similarity” (*Ibid.*). Other theorists claim, however, that “interpersonal similarity between a simulator and a target’s mental state or process does not qualify as mental simulation unless it arises from intra-personal reuse of the simulator’s own mental states or process” (*Ibid.*). Gallese and Sinigaglia adopt the latter interpretation of ‘mirroring’ although they also claim that, by doing so, they are not denying that resemblance plays a role in the simulationist heuristic allegedly encoded in the mirroring mechanisms. They also pick up Goldman and de Vignemont’s (2009, 155) notion of ‘embodied representations’ and characterise ES in general terms as “the reuse of mental states and processes involving representations that have a bodily format” (*Ibid.*, 4). It is important to note that ES encompasses different though interrelated levels of analysis. In the first place, there is the neurophysiological level, at which cortical regions of the brain show certain patterns of activation. In the second place, there is the functional level, at which ES can be properly located. Indeed, ES is described as a functional mechanism that is, according to Gal-

lese, “*implicit, automatic, and unconscious*” (2003, 174. Emphasis in the original). It is also characterised as “mandatory, pre-rational, non-introspectionist, [...] pre-linguistic and non-metarepresentational” (Gallese 2010, 82). In the third place, there is the experiential level of analysis, which is accessible from a first-person perspective.

To what extent can ES be considered as modelling EOD upon self-directness? One possible *explanation* for the recurrence of the idea of EOD in the ES literature would be to say that the former idea ought to be located at the third level of analysis. Having direct and experiential access to the other - in the cases of the understanding of emotions, sensations, and intentions - would be the *explanandum* for which ES is intended to account, as Gallese occasionally suggests (2011, 37). However, restricting the appearance of the concept of EOD to the level of the explanandum seems to make a rather weak case in favour of it. A stronger way of construing the commitment of ES proponents to the notion of EOD is by referring to the notion of reuse (Gallese and Sinigaglia 2011, 5). In the ES account, other-directness can be modelled upon self-directness because, in the relevant cases, both involve the *same* cognitive and representational mechanisms of an individual. We might lack the details of the inter-level relationships, but if the cognitive mechanisms that are at play when, for example, Individual A executes a goal-oriented action and when A observes the same kind of action performed by Individual B, there does seem to be reason to claim that A’s understanding of B’s action is *as direct as* A’s access to his own action. ES simultaneously attempts to explain the difference between the two cases and therefore the asymmetry between self- and other-ascription of mental states in terms of the differing intensities of response shown by mirror neurons in each case (Gallese 2011, 45; 2010, 85).

The notion of reuse, however, refers to the subpersonal levels of analysis, whereas the idea of EOD seems to correspond to the personal level. To what extent, then, could it be qualified as experiential? Gallese suggests that the notion of experience at stake here is still very loosely defined (*Ibid.*, 47). In any case, it is possible to ask whether modelling EOD on the basis of self-directness via the notion of reuse is a promising means of challenging the unobservability principle. As some theorists have argued, the claim that ES is compatible with the idea of EOD seems to be in tension with the commitment of ES to simulation theory (Zahavi 2012, 248; Gallagher 2007, 359). The underlying thinking in this line of critique is that a sufficiently robust notion of simulation (even if spelled out as an implicit, subpersonal simulation) involves an understanding of mental state attribution as some sort of projection. This, however, would not be truly compatible with the idea of direct experiential access to the other’s mind. Gallese and Sinigaglia suggest a response to this objection: ES need not be construed as a process taking place in steps but, rath-

er, as a constitutive part of directly experiencing others (2011, 5). However, even if we understand ES as constitutive in this sense, the perceptual input that feeds the functional mechanism would have to be deprived of mental properties in the first place if ES were to accomplish any role. Yet as Zahavi has suggested, if ES is needed to supplement a psychologically meaningless perceptual input with the information required for attributing a mental state to the other, this “does seem to commit embodied simulation to a form of projectivism – where I ultimately find in the other what I have put there myself” (2012, 248). Ultimately, then, it can be questioned whether ES can really make sense of the idea of EOD as a challenge to the unobservability principle.

IV. The Empathy Model

The Empathy Model of EOD does not regard the latter in terms of object-perception or self-perception but, rather, considers empathy as a *sui generis* kind of intentionality with its own irreducible standard of directness. In the classical phenomenological tradition, this account is suggested by Edmund Husserl and, more explicitly, by Edith Stein. Husserl occasionally suggests that empathy should be conceived of in its specificity vis-à-vis other kinds of intentional accomplishments, such as self- and external object-perception (see Zahavi 2012, 230) while Stein describes empathy as “eine Art erfahrender Akt *sui generis*” (Stein 2010, 20). The plausibility of the empathy model depends on making a convincing case to the effect that other-directness is irreducible to both self-directness and object-directness, without falling into the simple stipulation that empathy is by definition the kind of intentionality that delivers other-directness. The case in favour of the distinction between empathy and self-perception is quite straightforward: In perceiving my own experiences, these are given, as Stein notes, with a quality of primordially that is not present when I am experientially directed to another’s experiences (*Ibid.*, 20). One’s own experiences are given to oneself in a distinctive manner in which the other’s experiences are not and could not be given. Indeed, as Husserl suggests, if they were given to me in such a manner, the other’s experiences would cease to be the other’s and would become my own (Husserl 1982, 109; see Zahavi 2011).

What about the contrast between empathy and object-perception? While it would be possible to recognise important differences between perceiving others and perceiving objects, one might think that empathy need necessarily be founded upon object-perception to get off the ground. On the one hand, regarded as a basic capacity of being aware of others, empathy must crucially have a perceptual component if it is not to collapse into an obscure notion. On the other hand, it is much less clear that appealing to object-perception is sufficient for clarifying the specific quality of other-directness delivered by empathy. That is to say, if what we perceive of the oth-

er is at a basic level an object of some sort, it is not clear from this how we could come to experience the other as a *subject*, which empathy supposedly accomplishes. That there is a lurking tension here can be illustrated by considering the following description:

Any intentional act that discloses or presents “foreign experience” counts as empathy. Although empathy, thus understood, is based on perception (of the other’s bodily presence) and can involve inference in difficult or problematic situation [...] it is not reducible to some additive combination of perception and inference. (Thompson 2007, 386)

A question that this characterisation raises is how to understand the claim that empathy is perceptually based on another’s bodily presence while at the same time resisting the idea that it involves “some additive combination” of perception and inference. After all, if one opts to construe the notion of inference in sufficiently broad terms, the idea that empathy is both based upon perception and is at the same time *more* than this does not rule out an inferential process that brings together the perceptual and extra-perceptual components in question. Confronting this difficulty, one possibility could be to concede that we perceive others as objects although surely not as *mere* objects. If this is so, however, empathy would likely be an inferential achievement, allowing us to move from the visual presence of an object to the awareness of a person. Empathy’s direct character would thus be compromised since it would ultimately be founded on mere object-perception. Another possible move would be to try dissipating the tension by introducing a suitable distinction of perspectives. This seems to be Stein’s and, at least occasionally, Husserl’s suggestion (Hua XXXV, 107). According to Stein, if we consider empathy in its specificity as an apprehension of another’s experience, it does not have the character of external (or object-) perception (Stein 2010, 15). In contrast, if we focus on the “complex act” that co-apprehends another’s experience with the bodily expression of this experience, such an act can be designated as external perception (*Ibid.*, 15, 19).

The problem with this line of thought, however, is that the emerging picture on empathy does not seem very consistent. On the one hand, empathy would be *sui generis* with respect to external perception, but on the other hand, it could be regarded as a component of a complex perceptual act. From one perspective, we would have direct empathic apprehension of the other’s mental state, but from another perspective, the mental phenomenon disclosed by empathy would only be co-apprehended with the bodily expression. Since both perspectives cannot be held simultaneously, one might ask if one of them has an experiential primacy. Given that, as we have seen in the second section, co-apprehension of mentality does not amount to ex-

periential access to it, the most promising route for spelling out the notion of EOD seems to be the first perspective. By doing so, however, we recognise the limitations of the distinction of perspectives as a means of clarifying the relationship between empathy and object-perception.

I think that a more promising strategy for clarifying the relationship between empathy and object-perception is to focus on their respective intentional structures. Can both be accounted for in the same terms? One way of approaching this question is by considering the notion of transcendence that they involve. The idea that perceptual objects are given as transcendent was implicit in the second section's discussion of presence and co-presence. An object is perceived only from a certain perspective, but this does not make our experience of it less than an experience of the object that we perceive. When we experience something as an object, we have an apprehension of it as something that transcends our actual and partial apprehension of it. As Zahavi writes, "It is only when we experience something as a unity within a multiplicity of adumbrations, or as an identity across differences, that is, as something that transcends its actual appearance or that can be intended as the same through a variety of experiential states, that we experience it as an object" (2005, 64). If we take into account this characterisation of object-transcendence, we can ask whether it is suitable for clarifying the transcendence with which someone's emotion is experientially given.

Phenomenological accounts have consistently emphasised that the idea of having direct experience of, say, another's fear does not amount to a full understanding of it. There is more to the other's emotion than we can perceive. Can this feature be explained in terms of object-transcendence? We could opt to construe the idea of transcendence in such a way that the other's emotion is thought of as a (however fleeting) pole of identity to which we have only perspectival access. However, I think we should refrain from following this route. To start with, object-transcendence involves the model of presence and co-presence that we have already encountered in discussing the Hybrid Mind model. If we take our experiential awareness of other minds to consist of our capacity to perceive object-like features, open in principle to a perceptual exploration according to the modalities of presence and co-presence, something crucial seems to be lost, namely the specific quality of expressivity characteristic of gestures and other bodily expressions. This quality, I would like to suggest, deploys its proper character when we are not primarily directed at it, for example when we are not focused on the gesture as expressive (when we do not see the smile *as a smile*) but are focused, rather, on the emotion itself that achieves expression through the gesture. I would like to call this feature - that is, the idea that the empathic disclosure of another's emotion does not primarily target the other's ges-

tures *as* gestures - the phenomenological transparency of gestures and other bodily expressions.

However, by endorsing the idea that empathy grants direct experience of the other's emotion, we should not simply abandon the important intuition that there is more to it than that to which we have experiential access. Is there any alternative for spelling out the idea of other-transcendence besides conflating it with object-transcendence? I think there is one, which I shall sketch very briefly on the basis of Stein's account. Stein's description of empathy as a kind of experiencing act in which the empathised experience is non-primordially given does not represent her full account. She also says that empathy is *sui generis* to the extent that the empathiser "feels led" by the target's experience (Stein 2010, 20). This feature is further clarified by her conception of empathy as a complex intentional accomplishment. For Stein, empathy can involve different levels of realisation, corresponding to a movement of progressive enrichment, which need not occur in all cases (*Ibid.*, 19). The first level is the one on which we have focused so far, an awareness of the other's emotion as something experientially foregrounding the empathiser. But Stein remarks that if we follow the implicit tendencies of the grasped emotion, focusing on its intentional object, we reach a second level of empathic understanding. This is the level of a "fulfilling explication" of the other's emotion (*Ibid.*), in which we take the other's perspective. And after pursuing the fulfilling explication of the other's emotion, the latter appears on a third level of empathy as an enriched object facing the empathiser (*Ibid.*).

The movement of experiential enrichment described through these different stages offers a reasonable alternative to understand what an emotion's transcendence might consist in. One is first aware of the other's emotion as something standing in front of oneself, but following the implicit tendencies of the perceived emotion, one comes to take the perspective of the other. Crucially, this process of perspective-taking or *Hineinversetzen* does not imply a cancellation of the difference between self and other, of which one must be aware for taking the *other's* perspective. To put it in Stein's terms, it does not involve a passage from non-primordially to primordially (Stein 2010, 22). This understanding of an emotion's transcendence does not spell this notion out in terms of the transcendence of a perceptual object but, rather, in terms of the transcendence of the worldly situation in which the other and her emotions are necessarily embedded. While perceptual objects allow for object-like exploration and engagement, they do not allow for the different levels of accomplishment that empathy does. Unlike objects, other people and their emotions afford the perceiver's capacities for perspective-taking and not merely for enaction. The other is not first presented as a perceptual object supplemented by some kind of empathic

accomplishments but is instead presented from the start as an other, affording quite different possible engagements than does an object. Thus, if another's emotion is experienced as transcendent, this is not because it has hidden or occluded aspects but because it affords capacities on the part of the perceiver that are not at play when being directed toward objects. Other people, unlike to objects, allow for the construction of potentially shared meanings and shared worlds, and even at the basic level of detecting at least some of their mental features, there seems to be a reference to this open-ended possibility.

But even if it might be conceded that an emotion's transcendence is different from the transcendence of a perceptual object, in what sense would it be possible to directly perceive an emotion? Given that emotions apparently lack colours and sizes, is this not a preposterous claim? In my view, the crucial point in qualifying empathy as perceptual is not to take a readymade concept of perception and evaluate whether empathy can be classified under it but, rather, to determine how to regard the relationship between other-perception, self-perception, and object-perception. One possibility for clarifying the idea of empathic perception is to claim that we perceive the other's emotion in her expressive behaviour. However, behaviour is qualified as expressive to the extent that it could be, in principle, not expressive. Certainly, the notion of expressive behaviour allows for the possibility of distinguishing between an emotion and its bodily expression, and there are surely cases in which the two can be dissociated. But the possibility of cases of dissociation of mentality and expression should not lead us to construe the non-dissociated, normal cases in terms of an addition of the two components. That is to say, from the possibility that someone might be happy while suppressing all external manifestations of his emotion, one should not conclude that undergoing that emotion usually amounts to being happy *and* externally manifesting it. Why would this be so? One might ask, after all, to what extent a suppressed happiness qualifies as happiness at all (see Cole 2010). It is not evident that the original unity of the perceived emotion can be retroactively reconstructed on the basis of what appears decoupled in cases of dissociation.

One could ask to what extent we are normally intentionally directed to others' expressive behaviour. There seems to be a sense in which we do not perceive people's behaviour, not even their expressive behaviour or gestures. For example, if we run into someone on the street and see her joy, to what extent do we see her laughter or other features of her expressive behaviour? Is not it the case that, precisely because we are aware of her joy, we are not directed to the expressivity of her behavioural features? Describing this situation as if we saw the other's joy in her expressive behaviour seems to involve a stepping back from the lived-through situation as a result of

adopting a reflective stance concerning it. Of course, we can also focus through object-perception on the gestural patterns, expressive movements, and body parts involved in the other's behaviour, for example if we are in the situation of trying to figure out what the other is feeling. But a thematic awareness of another's expressive gestural patterns can only take place on the grounds of a prior experiential disclosure of the other's emotion. From this perspective, empathy amounts to an irreducible form of person-perception. If there is a cognitive accomplishment to be explained, it is not how we come to attribute mindedness to physical bodies or features initially deprived of mentality but, rather, how our original perception of people and their emotions can be distilled into behavioural and mental components.

Several studies raised in support of 'primary intersubjectivity' - that is, the early embodied and interactional capacities exhibited by infants, which allow them to understand another's intentions and emotions - are compatible with the Empathy Model. Infants' very early sensitivity for distinguishing people from inanimate objects (see Gallagher 2001, 87), as shown in neonate imitation studies, can be explained on the basis of a basic empathic capacity for experiential awareness of others. This sensitivity need not be interpreted as a capacity for discriminating people *from other* objects. We can be experientially directed not only to objects but also to our own and other's experiences, and much might be won by recognising that each of these modalities has its own standards of directness and optimality. If this is so, the Empathy Model might be a promising means of spelling out the idea of EOD.

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