

Joel Smith's definition of empathy II

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Abstract. I flag what seem to me to be some minor concerns about Joel Smith's definition of empathy, but maybe they are important to someone.

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According to Joel Smith, Person *A* empathizes with *B* if and only if three conditions are met:

- (1) *A* is consciously aware that *B* is ψ .
- (2) *A* is consciously aware of what being ψ feels like.
- (3) On the basis of (1) and (2), *A* is consciously aware of how *B* feels.

I think I was expected to find some problems with this definition apart from the worry I flagged last time about a lack of buyers, metaphorically speaking. But it is hard.

(i) It looks as if this definition will apply beyond emotional states. Person *B* is just seeing something red. Person *A* notices. Person *A* is aware of what it is like to see something red. Person *A* knows what that feels like. Thereby *A* is consciously aware of how *B* feels. We do not ordinarily count this as a case of *A* empathizing with *B*.

(ii) Can you empathize with someone for forgetting their mother's birthday? But what does forgetting something feel like? A natural answer "It doesn't feel like anything when you forget."

Reference

Smith, J. 2017. What is empathy for? *Synthese* 194: 709-722.