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**Husserl and Stein on the Phenomenology of Empathy:
Perception and Explication***

Abstract

Within the phenomenological tradition, one frequently finds the bold claim that interpersonal understanding is rooted in a sui generis form of intentional experience, most commonly labeled empathy (Einfühlung). The following paper explores this claim, emphasizing its distinctive character, and examining the phenomenological considerations offered in its defense by two of its main proponents, Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein. After offering in section 2 some preliminary indications of how empathy should be understood, I then turn to some characterizations of its distinctive structure, considering, in section 3, the Husserlian claim that certain forms of empathy are perceptual in nature, and in section 4, Stein's insistence that empathetic experience frequently involves explicating the other's own intentional experiences. Section 5 will conclude by assessing the extent to which their analyses lead support to a conception of empathy as an intuitive experience of other minds.

Keywords

empathy, perception, interpersonal understanding, Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein

Introduction

Treatments of interpersonality and intersubjectivity in the phenomenological tradition have unanimously rejected the notion that understanding and relating to other minds and persons is most fundamentally a matter of inference, inner simulation, or projection. More positively, phenomenologists have classically attempted to identify and describe a form of experience, empathy (*Einfühlung*), in which other embodied minds are grasped as such, and which more complex and cognitive forms of intersubjectivity take as their point of departure.¹ Such an approach may have significant implications for contemporary discussions of social cognition and interpersonal understanding, since if correct it challenges certain assumptions held by the two dominant camps of theory-theory and simulation-theory. In this paper I will show how certain

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I am grateful to David Carr, Adam Farley, Axel Honneth, Zhida Luo, John Michael, Alessandro Salice, Joonas Taipale, and Dan Zahavi, each of whom read an earlier draft of this paper and provided invaluable comments and thought-provoking discussion, as well as two anonymous reviewers.

other could not be preceded by more fundamental forms of *intersubjectivity*, but rather that empathy precedes all other forms of *interpersonal understanding*. For two Husserlian accounts of pre-empathic intersubjectivity, see Zahavi (2001) and Steinbock (1995).

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This line of thought need not be committed to the idea that the concrete encounter with the

analyses from Husserl's *Ideen II* and Stein's *Zum Problem der Einfühlung* mark out the contours of an account of empathy which distinguishes it sharply from both imaginative simulation and analogizing inference. After offering in section 2 some preliminary indications of how empathy should be understood, I will turn to some characterizations of its phenomenological structure, considering, in section 3, the Husserlian claim that within the personalistic attitude empathy can be understood as a perception, and in section 4, Stein's insistence that empathy accomplishes an explication of the other's own intentional experiences. Section 5 will conclude by assessing the extent to which their analyses lead support to a conception of empathy as experience, and more specifically as an intuitive givenness of foreign subjectivity.

1. Empathy as a mode of experience

Towards the end of Satyajit Ray's film *Pather Panchali*, a poor man arrives home after several months away, unaware that in his absence his young daughter has died. On his arrival, the man encounters and cheerfully greets his wife, who at first seems to avoid his gaze, until he shows her a sari which he intends to give as a gift to his daughter. His wife clutches the gift to her chest and begins to uncontrollably cry. Realizing his wife's grief, the man tries, in vain, to comfort her. But, just in this immersed awareness of his wife's sadness, in feeling her trembling movements, hearing her desperate screams, and seeing her hand clenched around the sari, the tragic event invoked by his wife's misery becomes apparent to the man. Indeed, that he now realises his daughter's death is clear to his wife and to their nearby son, in that he himself descends into cries of grief.

Husserl and Stein would call the man's awareness of his wife's sadness an *empathic* awareness. Characteristic of such awareness is a certain form of directedness towards another subject. Empathic awareness is thus to be considered as an intentional awareness, and broadly speaking it has as its intentional object either the other herself, or something belonging to her experiential life. But which particular acts are we then to pick out, from such concretely intersubjective encounters as lived through by us, and identify as acts of empathy? In this paper, I will work with the contention that empathy, at least in its most pregnant and precise sense, does not refer to the man's attempts to comfort his wife, nor to his own feeling of grief upon learning of his daughter's death, and, likewise, neither to whatever sense of unity he may experience with his wife when he himself becomes overwhelmed by sadness.

Rather, here I will follow Husserl and Stein and suggest that these more complex occurrences may only be clarified once we attend to something which they each in some sense presuppose. More specifically, what counts in the strict sense as empathy are those experiential acts in which a foreign subject is not merely hypothesized or inferred, but rather given and experienced herself. To return to our example, it is simply not the case that the man first sees a merely physical body which he then takes as indicative of his wife, rather he has an irreducible experience of the woman herself, an experience which moreover makes all else which occurs in the encounter possible.

A question arises here concerning, in Husserlian terms, whether empathic experience is intuitive in character. I cannot here fully spell out the complex notion of intuitive experience, but one should note, first, that only those intentional acts which present their object, as opposed to re-presenting it in some manner, are intuitive experiences, and in this sense intuitive experience

involves a certain form of direct or presentational consciousness of its object. According to Husserl, for each basic class of intentional object (e.g., physical thing or mathematical equation), there corresponds a type of intentional act (e.g., perceptual or categorical) in which such an object is given intuitively. And such intuitive givenness is accomplished when the thing actually presents itself to us as bodily present (*leibhaftig*), as opposed to its being intended in a more indirect fashion via images, signs or representations (Husserl 1976: 11, 14–15 [2014: 9, 13]).

Noteworthy also is the epistemic role played by intuitive experience, or its evidential character. While an act with only propositional or imaginary content is intentional, in the sense of being directed towards and picking out an object or state of affairs, whether it counts as a form of knowledge with respect to the latter is not an intrinsic feature of the act. Rather, to achieve epistemic contact with the world, judgements must stand in certain justificatory relations to other acts. According to Husserl, one way in which a judgement can gain a *prima facie* justificatory basis is for the object or state of affairs that it picks out to be directly given in intuitive experience (Husserl 1976: 51 [2014: 44]). In this regard, the exemplary case of intuitive experience is perception. While I can merely entertain the thought of say, my bicycle being stolen, and while I can imagine it being taken from the spot outside where I left it this morning, my (“empty”) intention towards this state of affairs gains a rather strong epistemic basis (becomes “fulfilled”) if I look out the window and actually *see* a stranger cycling off with it.²

Now, for Husserl, the term ‘empathy’ denotes a specific class of basic intentional experiences: “The intentionality in one’s own ego that leads into the foreign ego is the so-called empathy” (Husserl 1962: 321). Similarly, as Stein puts it in *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*, as an irreducible intentional awareness of other subjects’ lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*), empathy is “a kind of experiential act *sui generis*”, which she describes as the experience (*Erfahrung*) of foreign consciousness in general (Stein 2008: 20 [1989: 11]).³ In our pre-theoretical lives, that is, other people appear to us as existing realities which, in a quite peculiar way, differ in their givenness from oneself and from the merely physical. And, as Stein observes, the basic form of awareness one has of other people is not a matter of recollection, anticipation, or imagination, and neither does it involve mental images, inferences or communication (Stein 2008: 20 [1989: 11]). Indeed, our thoughts about and images of the other’s mental life gain whatever validity they have from the (admittedly often complex and mediated) ways in which they are rooted in acts of empathy, in which foreign experiencing is actually encountered (Stein 2008: 31 [1989: 19]).

Thus empathy seems to bear many of the hallmarks of intuitive experience. And yet a puzzle presents itself here. For empathy, considered as an aware-

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For a recent Husserlian account of the epistemological import of perception, one which engages in detail with contemporary philosophical discussions of this issue, see Hopp (2011).

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When referring to Stein, I have used the critical *Gesamtausgabe* edition of *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*. Where possible I have provided references to the translation by Waltraut Stein in square brackets, although I have at

times departed from her terminologically. In particular, I have rendered ‘*Erlebnis*’ as ‘lived experience’, ‘*Erfahrung*’ as ‘experience’, ‘*Originär*’ as ‘originary’, and ‘*Vergegenwärtigung*’ as ‘presentification’. When referring to Husserl on the other hand, I have simply referred to the pagination of the critical *Husserliana* series, since the English translations of these texts (where available) also contain marginal references to the latter, with the exception of the translation of *Ideen I*.

ness of subjective experience, clearly lacks the intimacy of self-awareness. After all, one's lived experiences are, irrespective of whether they are given to another subject in empathy, manifest to oneself in a distinctive and immediate way.⁴ And if this immediacy were characteristic of empathy then it would not be an experience of the other since, as Husserl remarks, the other himself and I myself would then be the same (Husserl 1950: 139). Or in Stein's formulation, while an empathetic experience is self-given in an originary (i.e. direct and immediate) fashion, the other's experiences as the content of empathy are not given in such an originary fashion (Stein 2008: 19 [1989: 10]; cf. Husserl 1976: 11 [2014: 10]). But this insight can be reformulated in more positive terms. Consider the father returning home in *Pather Panchali*: prior to his own experience of misery upon comprehending the situation he has uncovered, and indeed presumably continuing to exist, although undoubtedly as transformed, during his misery, is a numerically and qualitatively distinct awareness of his wife's misery. One's own misery is brought to givenness in a radically different manner to the other's misery – but essentially so, since this difference is what permits my own misery to present itself as genuinely mine, and the other's misery as genuinely other (Stein 2008: 54 [1989: 38]). It follows that empathy is both an irreducible, direct and intuitive experience of other subjects, yet one essentially characterized by its distinction from the basic intimacy of the self to itself.

I will try to show in the following that such formulations lose much of their paradoxical taste when one considers more closely Husserl and Stein's positive account of empathy. But first, it should be emphasized that this conception of empathy differs significantly from that offered by contemporary "simulationist" theorists.⁵ Consider de Vignemont and Jacob, who appear to resonate with the account presented above when they describe empathy as an "other-directed" experience of another subject's affective state (de Vignemont and Jacob 2012: 304). But in describing empathy as an experience they mean that it requires the empathizing subject to imaginatively enact and first-personally "feel" an affective state, so as to understand the mind of the other (de Vignemont and Jacob 2012: 297; de Vignemont 2010: 290). And when they emphasize the other-directedness of empathy they mean that the empathizer recognizes that her first-personal affective state is both caused by and similar to an affective state first-personally experienced by the "target" subject (de Vignemont and Jacob 2012: 305). For Husserl and Stein, on the other hand, empathy should precisely be understood as an intentional act which immediately grasps the other embodied mind, irrespective of whether the comprehended experiences are currently first-personally lived through by the empathizing subject, imaginatively or otherwise. And in this sense they endorse a notion of empathic experience as not only mediately or projectively other-directed. Unlike those theorists who assume that the minds of other people are ultimately unexperienceable domains that can be posited only through imagination or inference, the account offered by Stein and Husserl has the strength of being attentive to the subtle and unique manner in which our everyday familiarity with others arises and is grounded in experiential life.

2. Empathic perception and expressivity

In illuminating certain salient aspects of this account, I will begin by focussing on a claim which one finds fairly frequently in Husserl's work, and occasionally in Stein's, namely that in at least a certain mode of accomplishment empathy must be understood as perceptual.⁶ Perception should here be under-

stood as an intuitive experience of a transcendent object in one's surrounding world that is experientially grasped as such, although as we shall see a peculiarity in the case of empathy is that the other's body is perceived as an expressive foreign subject, and thus as not simply an entity "in" the world. Before considering this line of thought more closely, it should be noted that on the Husserlian account, perception involves two interrelated forms of presence, which must both necessarily be operative, and he names these primal presence (*Urpräsenz*) and appresence (*Appräsenz*). To take an example, I may only perceive a house as something there before me in its bodily presence if a certain limited set of the house's spatial aspects are currently sensuously present to me, say the side of it which faces the street and the interior of certain rooms whose outer windows I peer through. The *object* present, however, is only a transcendent object in as much as its sensuously appearing aspects are accompanied by profiles which are not currently sensuously present, but which are rather presentified or appresented (Husserl 1950: 150–151; 1952, §44).⁷ That is, what is genuinely given sensuously as currently oriented towards my body only appears perceptually, is only experienced as the exterior of a house I am walking past, in virtue of a co-given horizon of other aspects which do not currently appear sensuously, but which are taken in the perceptual act itself as possible sensuous presences for someone. These aspects, which are sensuously absent but nevertheless co-intended as aspects of the object bodily present, do not only enable the transcendence of the perceived object, but also play an essential role in determining what the perceived object is experienced *as*: "from the very beginning, *what this experience presents must belong to the unity of the very object appresented.*" (Husserl 1950: 151) Thus for Husserl, both primal or sensuous presence and appresence are fundamental components of all perception, and the same structure applies in the case of empathy.

⁴ For detailed elucidations of this self-manifestation or pre-reflective self-awareness, and arguments to the effect that it should inform philosophical discussions of selfhood and consciousness, see Zahavi (1999, 2014b).

⁵ Zahavi (2014b) has recently argued in detail for the contemporary significance of the positive accounts of empathy offered by phenomenologists such as Husserl, Stein, Scheler, and Schutz, offering a detailed critical analysis of the discussion between theory-theorists and simulationists. There has been something of an upsurge of work on the phenomenology of empathy in recent years, much of it engaging with the social cognition debate. Along with the articles referred to elsewhere here, see e.g. Thompson (2001), De Preester (2008), Smith (2010), Zahavi (2010), Zahavi and Overgaard (2012), Overgaard (2012), Ratcliffe (2012), Gallagher (2012), Ingerslev (2014), Walsh (2014), and Taipale (Forthcoming).

⁶ See e.g. Husserl 1973c: 514, 641; 1973b: 352; 1950: 150–151; and Stein 2008: 15, 19–20, 31, 75, 78 [1989: 58, 61].

⁷ Presentification (*Vergegenwärtigung*) should not be taken as strictly identical to appresentation. Husserl uses the former term to denote a distinct act which intuitively gives something not perceptually present – thus memory presentifies the past, imagination the imaginary, etc – and as such is to be distinguished from the co-givenness of the absent profiles of an object, which is non-intuitive and occurs only as a partial intention within a presentative act (Husserl 1966: 4, 68–69). However, when describing empathy Husserl also characterizes appresentation as "a presentification combined by association with presentation ... in the particular function of 'co-perception'". (Husserl 1950: 150) This may be due a peculiar feature of empathic perception, namely that here the presentification of the other's experiences functions in an appresentative way, since it is constantly intertwined with the sensory givenness of his or her body, in such a manner that both are given as actually present aspects of a perceived unity.

A phenomenological elucidation of the notion of empathy as a form of perception can be found in Husserl's analyses of the personalistic attitude in the second book of *Ideen*, and it will first be necessary to briefly spell out what this attitude amounts to. As Husserl argues in Sections 1 and 2 of *Ideen II*, the naturalistic attitude, which is the orientation towards the world adopted by the natural scientist in his or her research activities, is guided by the underlying motive of determining the 'objective', substantial properties of physical or psychophysical entities, those which are manifest in the altering states of physical things and creatures in their relation to causal circumstances.⁸ But this motive can be realized only after a certain abstraction is accomplished, in which the axiological, practical, and aesthetic predicates which are, in ordinary life, immediately experienced as belonging to worldly objects are disregarded, or as Husserl also puts it, in which certain intentionalities belonging to the personal sphere are temporarily "neutralized" and the relativity of perceptual objects to the bodily peculiarities of their perceiver overcome, so that the 'Objectively real' can be come into view as something to be studied through mathematical natural science (Husserl 1952: 8–10, 27, 76, 84–90, 186–8). The personalistic attitude, on the other hand, is just the prior attitude of everyday life, in which subjects do not adopt an abstractive orientation towards the objects of their surrounding world (*Umwelt*), but rather experience them in their life-worldly concreteness, a concreteness which refers in its sense to one's own and others' personal evaluations, motivations, and past experiences (Husserl 1952: §§50–51). Husserl thus maintains that "the naturalistic attitude is subordinated to the personalistic", and that the natural scientist may only take his or her theoretical activity to bear an exhaustive, absolute and unconditioned cognitive relation to the world by means of "a kind of self-forgetfulness of the personal Ego", only if the abstraction just described has become a matter of habit (Husserl 1952: 183–184). He also insists that it is for subjects of the personalistic as opposed to the naturalistic attitude that sociality operates, and in which culture and society can blossom, since it is in this attitude that others are encountered as persons and engaged with communicatively (Husserl 1952: §51).

The manner of givenness of *other people* for subjects in the personalistic attitude, then, provides an appropriate basis from which a phenomenology of empathy may at least gain an initial footing. And for Husserl, the personal subject "sees" in its surrounding world other personal subjects, "persons who are engaged in their own surrounding world" (Husserl 1952: 190). More precisely, other persons are not comprehended through the seeing of things, rather what is first and foremost seen of the other person is the person herself, as "intrinsically one" (Husserl 1952: 320). According to Husserl, we may only take other persons as mere things through a naturalistic apprehension, in which their lived body (*Leib*) is abstracted from this unity and regarded as a material thing like any other, a step which forces naturalistic psychology to posit a further natural strata in the form of a psyche (*Seele*) bound to and dependent upon the material body – a double movement which, while legitimate for certain theoretical purposes, certainly does not lead to the person as such (Husserl 1952: 139–140, 190–191). On the other hand, Husserl characterizes the other person as given in the personalistic attitude as a unity in which a lived body is given as immediately expressive of mental (*geistig*) – that is, personal-subjective – attributes or experiences, and he maintains that this peculiar, yet "thoroughly intuitive" unity is experienced most fully and thematically in acts of empathy (Husserl 1952: 236, 244).

Husserl more precisely characterizes the phenomenological structure of such experience in the following passage:

“In a certain way, I also experience (and there is a self-givenness here) the other’s lived experiences ; to the extent that empathy (*comprehensio*) accomplished as one with the originary experience of the lived body is indeed a kind of presentification [*Vergegenwärtigung*], one that nevertheless serves to ground the character of *co*-existence in the flesh. To that extent, what we have here is thus experience, perception. But this *co*-existence (“*appresence*” ...) does not, in principle, allow itself to be transformed into immediate originary existence (primal presence [*Urpräsenz*]).” (Husserl 1952: 198)

Husserl indicates here that the experience of the other person simultaneously involves a two-fold *appresence*. Given in *appresence* here are both aspects of what is physical (namely the absent “sides” of the other’s body) and non-physical aspects (namely the other’s lived experiences). It is only through being *co*-intended with both such sorts of *appresented* aspects that the aspect of the other which is sensuously given, appears *as* aspect of the other. Noteworthy here is that while the other’s *appresented* physical aspects may come to primal or sensuous presence through a movement on behalf of either the empathizing or the empathized subject, the experiential life of the other necessarily remains in *appresence*. On Husserl’s view, the lived experiences of the other may only be empathically experienced in such a way that they remain – in a certain sense – continually absent, as this is what grounds the other’s phenomenological character as *co*-existing, as a subject with his or her own lived experiences.

It is this double *appresence* of empathy which makes it an experience of an *expressive* whole, and to grasp the character of empathic perception it will be important to dwell on this notion of the object of empathy as something expressive. Husserl means by this, first, that the other’s spatiotemporal being is only experienced as such insofar as it immediately manifests the existence of foreign lived experience, and likewise that the other’s subjectivity is only directly experienced in its embodiment. While it is the other’s bodily presence which affords the possibility of his or her being concretely experienced, this bodily presence is always already an embodied-subjective one, or as Husserl expresses the point, the other human being which I see before me, “in his movements, in his action, in his speaking and writing, etc., is not a mere connection or linking up of one thing, called a soul, with another thing, a lived body. The lived body is, as lived body, filled with soul through and through.” (Husserl 1952: 240)

Moreover, in empathy one does not intend an aggregate of lived experiences, nor a unified physical body, but rather the object is precisely a person: “In empathy we apprehend persons” (Husserl 1952, 320). And this person appears as a unity which “*has* corporeality [*Leiblichkeit*], it has a body which is a physical thing with such and such qualities, and it *has* lived experiences and lived dispositions” (Husserl 1952: 240). Husserl’s point, then, is not merely that the other of empathy is a special sort of expressive object with both mental and

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See e.g. Husserl (1952: §11, §15–17, §32). Incidentally, Stein herself played a significance role in the formation of what we now know as *Ideen II*, since she elaborated and edited the manuscripts which ultimately found their way into this posthumously published work, and it is undoubtedly the case that some of the passages in this text are just as much her

own work as they are Husserl’s. The true extent of this will become much clearer with the publication of the original manuscripts that Husserl intended for use in *Ideen II* and *III* in a *Husserliana* volume, edited by Dirk Fonfara and Dieter Lohmar, that is expected to appear in 2015.

material strata, but rather that those aspects, as they are given to the subject empathizing, manifest the unity and transcendence of another personal life. The other experiential life which exists for the empathizing subject as, and “in”, this expressive unity, *also* exists in and for itself in a manner which *differs* from its existence-for-me, and Husserl thus writes that other’s own self-presence is *referred* to, but not *originally accomplished*, in the act of empathy (Husserl 1952: 198). But empathy is nevertheless a “thoroughly intuitive” experience of another person, one which frequently incorporates not only a recognition of the bare presence of another experiential life, but also an immediate grasp of the type of experiential episode the other is undergoing, and in this respect something of the other’s personality may even announce itself (Husserl 1952: 235, 273–274).

Finally, that the other of empathy is given as expressive means that an *expressive relation* pertains between the other’s body and the personal life experienced “therein”. But one should avoid the temptation to understand this as the idea that, while the other’s body is a perceived physical reality, her mental life is something merely intended *signitively*, as if her body were a sign for a distinct and absent object – rather, Husserl insists that what is experienced in empathy is the “unity of the ‘*expression*’ and the ‘*expressed*’”, the other person herself (Husserl 1952: 236). While Husserl in *Ideen II* does indeed speak of the other’s mind (*Geist*) as the *sense* of the lived-body, and claims that empathy is the apprehension of the lived body which grasps this sense, he means by this that empathy is an apprehension which discloses that body as what it concretely is (i.e., as the embodiment of a person), and he stresses that this occurs in a single stroke, and does not permit of temporal differentiation (Husserl 1952: 240–241, 244). The other’s facial expressions, for example, “are seen facial expressions, and they are immediately bearers of sense for the other’s consciousness, e.g., his will, which, in empathy, is characterized as the actual will of this person and as a will which addresses me in communication” (Husserl 1952: 235). In this vein, Husserl notes that the empathy in which such immediate expressivity is laid bare involves the other’s merely bodily appearances being *articulated* in such a manner that they constitute “a certain corporeality [*Leibliches*] with a certain mentality [*Geistigen*] – a certain one, which, as horizon of experience, is to be determined further by experience.” (Husserl 1952: 242) Husserl indicates here that there is a single apprehension which, in grasping its sense as an embodied mind, gives the body both its particular sense *as* this lived-body and *as* this personal subject, and moreover, that this “horizontal” givenness of the other person is open to further determination, is continually modifying and enriching itself. In short, in personalistic empathy the ‘merely physical’ is at no stage given, rather what presents itself is a whole, the person, with two intertwined dimensions, the lived body as essentially personally significant, and the personal subject as essentially manifesting itself in the lived body. Expressivity then means that the person is a unity of two dimensions – bodily “expression” of mind, mind “expressed” bodily – each of which gain their particular sense in relation to the other (Husserl 1952: 325).⁹

To summarize, Husserl’s analysis of the personalistic attitude suggests that one can speak of at least a certain type of empathy as perceptual, so long as one respects several crucial nuances. First, what is perceived in empathy is not a spatiotemporal thing, but rather another person. Second, while the phenomenological structures of empathy and the perception of things both involve a highly structured interplay of spatiotemporal aspects dynamically coming to presence and appresence, empathic intentionality also involves the

appresence of the other's mental life. Or rather, in empathy the other's body is given as immediately expressive, that is, as constituting a mentally infused bodily dimension, this dimension being intertwined, in personal unity, with a subjective life manifesting itself bodily. Third, and in light of this bodily 'articulated' subjective dimension of the other person, the object of empathy has a more profound transcendence than does the perceived spatiotemporal object, since the other's experiential life is grasped in the act of empathy as given to itself in a way which differs radically from its empathic givenness.

3. Empathic explication and foreign intentionality

There is, however, a certain danger in understanding empathy in terms of perception, since one may then end up overlooking a crucial aspect of empathy. In the scene from *Pather Panchali* introduced earlier, the man is aware of his wife as a world-directed subject of intentional acts. Only if it includes this latter awareness does empathy play a role in the man's realization that his wife is, in her sadness, aware of the all too worldly event of their daughter's death. It is unclear, perhaps, just how this realization is reached – perhaps a process of deliberation or imagination, or through a comprehension of the significance which the sari he gives to his wife has for her, play an important role. But in any case the realization has as its basis an experience the man has of his wife in which her own experiential world-directedness is explicated, and in a manner continuous with his perception of her. His empathic grasp, then, does not solely consist in a comprehension of something "about the other", but crucially involves a comprehension of the other's self-transcending experiences. Empathy is then able to achieve a grasp of the other's experiential life which uncovers aspects of the content, structure, and objects of that life. If it were not the case that these aspects could be empathically comprehended, that is, if the other's intentional experiences could not be manifested in their specificity, then the other would at best be *indeterminately* taken as a subject, and at worst, as a reified psychophysical "thing" of the natural or cultural world.

In her attempt to clarify this aspect of empathy, Stein helpfully distinguishes between empathy as perceptual experience of the other person, in which the other is the intentional object, and what she takes to different level of empathic accomplishment (*Vollzugsstufe*).¹⁰ As Stein notes, while in the initial apprehension of the other's sadness "in" her face, that sadness faces me as an object,

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Michael Theunissen has argued that, despite occasionally stressing the immediacy of personalistic alien experience, the mode of empathy which Husserl takes to underlie such experience is mediate and reifying, and that his account is therefore ultimately unable to do justice to the direct character of life-worldly alien encounters (Theunissen 1965: §§21–22). It seems to me, however, that Theunissen's presentation of *Ausdrucksverstehen* fails to do justice to Husserl's insistence that personalistic empathy is first and foremost an intuitive experience of the other as unitary embodied *Geist*, and that the expressive relation is located *within* this originary unity. The passages referred to above appear to adduce greater textual support to this

reading than Theunissen's own, of which the following formulation is typical: "Der fremde Leibkörper ist ja sozusagen das vorgegebene Material, das ich auf seine geistige Bedeutung hin interpretiere." (Theunissen 1965: 120) On the issue of expressivity in Husserl, see Heinämaa (2011).

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Stein's descriptions of this level or modality of empathy are highly suggestive but could probably benefit with more precision. Unsurprisingly, one finds a variety of interpretations in the secondary literature. Cf. Zahavi (2014: 137–138); Shum (2012: 185–195); Dullstein, (2013: 343–346).

“when I inquire into its implied tendencies (try to bring another’s mood to clear givenness to myself), the content, having pulled me into it, is no longer really an object. I am now no longer turned to the content but to the object of it, am at the subject of the content in the original subject’s place. And only after successively executed clarification, does the content again face me as an object.” (Stein 2008: 19 [1989: 10])

In Stein’s example, the perception of the other as undergoing a particular mood already contains tendencies towards a fulfilling explication, by means of which the (other’s) experiential context in which that mood is lived can be made thematic and explicated, in such a manner that the contents of the other’s experiences are incorporated within the content of the act of empathy (Stein 2008: 20 [1989, 11]). Stein claims that such empathic explication constitutes a clarification and fulfilment of the perceptual phase, and this implies that in optimal cases empathy has a certain teleological structure, that it unfolds towards an ideal state of comprehension in which, as Stein writes, the empathized joy is the same as the other’s originally lived joy “in every respect”, having “the same content and only a different mode of givenness.” (Stein 2008: 25 [1989: 15]) But what precisely does empathic explication amount to, if it is neither exactly empathic perception and yet does not involve the experience being given as if it were one’s own?

Stein describes explication as “the non-original parallel to the having of the experience”, by which she means that while the empathic act is, like any experience, one originally had, the empathized content, while being given *as* the content of *an* original experience, is not given in the manner in which one one’s own experiences are manifest as one lives through them, but is rather given as the content of an experience one is *not* originally accomplishing. Empathic living-in is not an original self-presentation, but rather a sort of “presentification of lived experiences”, that is, a bringing to givenness of what is originally present in experiences which the subject is not currently undergoing. That is, this stage of empathy is more closely analogous to imagination or memory than perception, in that the empathizing subject becomes momentarily aware of an experiential context in its lived concreteness, but one that differs in certain essential ways from her own current perceptual sphere. However, Stein emphasizes that here too empathy remains distinct from imagination and memory, targeting a different domain of experiences (namely, those of the other, not a past or imagined self), and having a different type of epistemic import and motivation (Stein 2008: 19–20, [1989: 10–11]). Empathic explication thus gives its content as the content of original experiences being had by another subject “here and now”, but not by the empathizing subject. And the content brought to givenness in this way is none other than that emptily intended in empathic perception, just as the subject for whom this content is originally “had” is the other personal subject empathically perceived.

Monika Dullstein (2013) has recently argued that, in light of her characterization of this explicatory stage as involving a non-original bringing to givenness of the other’s experiences, Stein’s analysis gives support to what de Vignemont and Jacob (2012) call in their own account the isomorphism condition of empathy. This condition states that, at least in the most enhanced and ideal form of empathy, both the empathizing and the empathized subject must *share* a mental state, in the sense of the empathizing subject having a representation of the mental state empathized, a representation which moreover is similar in its content and intentional object to the actual mental state represented (Dullstein 2013: 346–348). Dullstein correctly acknowledges that Stein’s description of empathic explication as a *Vergegenwärtigung* – a term which

Dullstein, perhaps misleadingly in this context, translates as ‘representation’ – does not commit her to the idea that the empathizing subject must imaginatively simulate the other’s experience, so as to experience it in a first-personal or primordial manner, a position which de Vignemont and Jacob defend in their own account (Dullstein 2013: 348). But if correctly understood, it seems to me that this insight of Stein’s renders inappropriate any talk of empathy as involving isomorphism, and indeed ‘representation’ in Dullstein’s sense. For if it is only the *other’s* experience that is presentified, and not my own, then in successful cases of empathic explication the experience presentified is not merely similar to the other’s actual experience, but it is that experience itself, given in the mode of empathy as opposed to that of self-awareness. Indeed for Stein the moment one presentifies an experience which one posits as something similar to, as opposed to sharing an identity with, the other’s experience, we now no longer have a case of empathy. Rather such a case would involve an act of imagination whose content is presumed to correspond to the reality of the other’s experience, a correspondence which could only be directly confirmed on the basis of a genuine act of empathy.¹¹

For Stein, that is, the only one who actually has the experience which I empathically explicate is the other who I see before me. Thus in such explication the content I grasp is original content *for* the other, content which I do not originally live through myself, or put differently, while in empathic perception one apprehends a foreign subject as embodied, empathic explication thematises this very same subject in the nexus of her world-directed intentional acts. To be more precise, the other’s intentionality is emptily meant in empathic perception, but it may only be determinately and fulfillingly uncovered through a positional shift on behalf of the empathizing ego in which the ‘I’ ceases to intend the other as object and rather allows the content and objects of the other’s own intending to become manifest. As Stein notes, the peculiarity of this mode of empathy, that it is neither intuitive nor representational, should not compel the phenomenologist to declare it unintelligible, but testifies only that “it refuses to be classified in one of the pigeonholes of psychology” (Stein 2008: 33 [1989: 20]). Moreover, while being a non-objectifying experience, it nevertheless makes possible a subsequent positional shift in which the experience is again intended as object, but now with a richer (and, we might add, potentially transformed) sense (Stein 2008: 19–20 [1989: 10–11]).

Husserl, on the other hand, does not appear to conceive of the relation between empathic perception and empathic explication in terms of a temporal progression from the former to the latter. Rather, in a passage already quoted, Husserl maintains that empathy as a presentification of the other’s lived experience *is unified* with the ordinary presentation of the lived body, and he

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Stein maintains that, despite differing from thing-perception in its making present what may not be strictly bodily given (but only co-given), it is precisely the non-representational character and evidential import of empathy that makes it comparable to the outer perception of material objects (Stein 2008: 31, 37–38 [1989: 19, 24]). Given this, it seems to me that when Dullstein stipulates that, in occasionally characterizing empathy as a perception Stein merely “tried to take her supervisor’s views into account and to point to a possible way of combining her and Husserl’s

ideas” (Dullstein 2013: 343), she underplays the structural similarities which Stein often stresses between thing-perception and empathy. Moreover, it is also worthwhile noting that when Stein distinguishes empathy from perception, she always distinguishes it from the perception of material objects. Consequently, I see no basis for supposing that Stein would reject the Husserlian analysis of section 3, and its conclusion that empathy may be regarded as perceptual-intuitive experience of the other person, understood as irreducible to the perception of material objects.

describes the experience which involves both apprehensions as a perception (Husserl 1952: 198). And he writes that in the “*comprehensive experience of the existence of the other*” he or she is understood, “without further ado, as a personal subject and thereby as related to Objectivities” (Husserl 1952: 191). Husserl’s position would then seem to be that empathic perception does not merely emptily and indeterminately grasp the content of the other’s lived experiences, so as to require a fulfilling explication, but rather that it already has those lived experiences as co-given in a non-objectifying manner, that it already presentifies them in their own directedness, and with their own intentional contents and objects, and that this informs the sense of the other person as perceived.¹²

Husserl occasionally goes so far as to claim that empathy is a non-experiential form of awareness, a claim which could be understood as the suggestion that sensory givenness is in fact inessential for empathy. As he writes, the empathic apprehension of the other as personal ego

“which here can no longer be considered an ‘experiential consciousness’ or an ‘apperception,’ still does not involve my making the natural reality of the other my thematic Object, i.e., taking a human being as a member of nature. Rather I am, in empathy, directed to the other Ego and Ego-life and not to psychophysical reality, which is a double reality with physical reality at the founding level. The other’s body is for me a passageway (in ‘expression,’ in indication, etc.) towards the understanding of the Ego there, the ‘he:’ he moves his hand, he reaches for this or that, he strikes, he considers, he is motivated by this or that. He is the centre of a surrounding world appearing to him, present to him in memory, thought about, etc., and included in it is a corporeal surrounding world, which to a great extent he has in common with me and with others.” (Husserl 1952: 347)

Husserl seems in this passage to identify empathy with the comprehension of the other’s subjectivity in its own concrete intentional directedness, to such an extent that such empathic comprehension is distinguished from, and even gains a certain priority over, the sensory *experience* of the other’s body. However, I take it that Husserl should not be understood here as denying that empathy is an experiential awareness of foreign subjectivity. Rather, his claim is that empathic experience has as an essential component a *comprehension* of what cannot be given merely sensuously, namely, the other’s subjective life and its own intentional correlates. Furthermore, this comprehension is so fundamental that in empathy the sensuously given is immediately encountered as *that which expresses* this subjective life. Expressivity, then, is for Husserl essentially connected with intentionality, and the perception of the personal subject always involves an element of comprehension of the other’s intentional directedness.

It seems to me that on this point Husserl’s and Stein’s respective accounts are not in fact mutually exclusive. With Stein, one can maintain that there are many cases in which one’s immediate apprehension of the other involves a certain emptiness of content, which then becomes determinate and full through the other’s intentional experiences being explicated. This may occur, for example, when one sees the miserable face of a homeless person, which (perhaps due to the intolerable normality of such encounters) one first apprehends as “the face of a beggar”, and then only subsequently grasps as embodying a presentified desperation. On the other hand, one can maintain with Husserl that empathy does not simply take the other as intentional object, that from the beginning the empathizing subject faces the presence of foreign intentional experiencing, and does so with some degree of insight into the structure and contents of the latter.¹³

Conclusion

In Section 2 I described empathy in terms of an intuitive givenness of foreign subjectivity, and it may now be considered how such a characterisation bears upon the two distinct moments of empathy, namely perception and explication, brought to light in Husserl's and Stein's analyses.

Let me first consider whether empathy can be understood as awareness of foreign subjectivity. It was suggested in Section 3 that, for Husserl, empathic perception is an awareness of another person. Characteristic of this other person is that he or she is a unified whole, one that is nevertheless an expressive whole, that is, that bears two intertwined dimensions, a bodily "expression" of subject and a subject "expressed" bodily. Furthermore, I suggested in Part 4 that the subject "expressed" in the personal whole perceived comes, or may come through an explicatory shift, to thematic focus in such a manner that his or her lived experiences may be thematically grasped in their own contents and their own specific character as intentional conscious acts. But in none of these accomplishments does the empathizing subject coincide with the one empathized. As Husserl underlines, all that I empathize in the other refers to an 'I' which is manifest to itself in essentially the same manner which I am to myself. But this self-manifestation, however, is utterly transcendent of my own, and that this transcendent self-manifestation is intended in empathy, and in a manner which fundamentally determines its character as an act, underlines both the alterity and the subjectivity of the other of empathy.

But to what extent do Husserl's and Stein's analyses permit talk of empathy as a mode of intuitive experience? If the perceived material object is, in a sense, relatively unproblematic as an example of the intuitively given, in virtue of the sensuously apparent being part of a the thing itself, and the latter being a totality which could in principle show itself fully by means of futural perspectival appearances, the other personal-subjective life is intuitively present only in a somewhat enigmatic sense. Empathy is intuitive insofar as it is that mode of experience by which the subject achieves, through the two moments of perception and explication, a *sui generis* grasp of a transcendent personal-subjective life, in its transcendence and yet also, to a certain extent, its determinate comportment. Yet what this intuitive givenness of the other essentially requires is a persistently non-original moment. While the other is directly grasped as a self-manifesting intentional life – in the sense that this grasping is an essential aspect of the intuitive experience of the other person – the other's experiential life may never be lived through in the most basic and original sense. But this is a necessary absence since, as we saw in Section 2, if it were so lived through the other would cease to be other and would become

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Cf. Carr 1987: 270.

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In fact, both Husserl and Stein distinguish between different levels of empathy, with the most basic experiential achievement being a passively occurring apperception of the other's body as a living body which senses, and they maintain that on this primitive experiential level there is not yet the expression of *Geist*, that the other is not here encountered as a subject of intentional activity (Stein 2008: 74–79 [1989: 56–61], Husserl 1973a: 455–457). But the recognition of such levels

need not motivate the denial of the claim I have been attributing to them here, namely that in personalistic empathy the other is experienced as an embodied and intentional mind "without further ado", since this thesis is entirely compatible with a more nuanced understanding of the various intentions and motivational relationships inherent within personalistic empathy. Indeed a complete account of the phenomenology of empathy would certainly need to incorporate such an understanding. For further discussion of this issue, see Zahavi (2014a).

one with me. Thus for the other's self-presence to be grasped as *the other's* it cannot be given but only comprehended or recognized, yet this recognition is already achieved in the experience of the other person's expressivity.¹⁴ It thus seems that empathy achieves a coincidence between experiential insight and the recognition of transcendence, or between direct intuition and alterity, and that Husserl is on firm ground when he writes as follows:

“Just as what is past can be originally given as past only through memory, and what is to come in the future can as such only be originally given through expectation, the foreign can only be originally given as foreign through empathy. Original givenness in this sense is the same as experience.” (Husserl 1959: 176)

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James Jardine

Husserl i Stein o fenomenologiji empatije: percepcija i eksplicacija

Sažetak

U fenomenološkoj tradiciji često se nalaze hrabre tvrdnje da je interpersonalno razumijevanje ukorijenjeno u sui generis obliku intencionalnog iskustva, koji se najčešće naziva empatijom (Einfühlung). Ovaj rad istražuje te tvrdnje, naglašujući njihov specifičan karakter, te ispituje fenomenološka razmatranja u obrani tih tvrdnji koje su ponudili dva istaknuta zagovaratelja, Edmund Husserl i Edith Stein. U drugome dijelu, nakon iznošenja nekih uvodnih indikacija kako bi se empatija uopće trebala razumijevati, pažnju pridajem nekim karakterizacijama specifične strukture empatije, uzimajući u obzir u trećemu poglavlju husserlovsku tvrdnju da su neki oblici empatije opažajne naravi, te u četvrtome poglavlju inzistiranje Edith Stein da empatičko iskustvo često uključuje ekspliciranje intencionalnih iskustava drugih. Peto poglavlje zaključujem s procjenom razine do koje njihove analize podupiru shvaćanje empatije kao intuitivnog iskustva drugih umova.

Ključne riječi

empatija, percepcija, interpersonalno razumijevanje, Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein

James Jardine

Husserl und Stein zur Phänomenologie der Empathie: Perception und Explikation

Zusammenfassung

Innerhalb der phänomenologischen Tradition findet man häufig die gewagte Behauptung, das interpersonale Verständnis sei in der Sui-generis-Form der intentionalen Erfahrung verwurzelt, die meistens als Empathie (Einfühlung) bezeichnet wird. Die vorliegende Arbeit erforscht diese Behauptung, indem sie ihren distinktiven Charakter hervorhebt und phänomenologische Betrachtungen examiniert, die zu ihrer Verteidigung deren zwei Hauptbegründer, Edmund Husserl und Edith Stein, vorgebracht haben. Nachdem ich im zweiten Teil einige vorbereitende Hinweise angebracht habe, darüber, wie man Empathie auslegen sollte, widme ich mich danach einigen Charakterisierungen ihrer distinktiven Struktur, indem ich im dritten Teil die husserlsche These betrachte, bestimmte Formen der Empathie seien in ihrer Natur perzeptuell, und im vierten Teil Steins Bestehen darauf, dass die empathische Erfahrung oftmals Explikationen eigener intentionaler Erfahrungen anderer enthält. Teil fünf schließt mit der Beurteilung ab, in welchem Umfang ihre Analysen die Auffassung der Empathie als einer intuitiven Erfahrung anderer Verstande unterstützen.

Schlüsselwörter

Empathie, Perception, interpersonales Verständnis, Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein

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Husserl et Stein sur la phénoménologie de l'empathie : perception et explication

Résumé

Dans la tradition phénoménologique, on trouve souvent qu'il est audacieux d'affirmer que la compréhension interpersonnelle soit enracinée dans une forme sui generis de l'expérience intentionnelle, désignée généralement comme empathie (Einfühlung). L'article suivant explore cette affirmation, en soulignant son caractère distinctif et en examinant les considérations phénoménologiques que proposent en sa défense deux de ses principaux partisans, Edmund Husserl et Edith Stein. Après avoir proposé dans la partie 2 quelques indications préliminaires sur comment l'empathie devrait être comprise, je me tourne ensuite vers quelques descriptions de la structure caractéristique de celle-ci, en considérant, dans la partie 3, l'affirmation husserlienne d'après laquelle certaines formes d'empathies sont de nature perceptive, puis dans la partie 4, l'insistance d'Edith Stein sur le fait que l'expérience empathique implique souvent l'explication des expériences intentionnelles propres à l'autre. La partie 5 conclura en évaluant jusqu'où leurs analyses soutiennent une conception d'empathie comme expérience intuitive des autres esprits.

Mots-clés

empathie, perception, compréhension interpersonnelle, Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein