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EMPATHY AND EMOTIONAL COEXPERIENCING IN THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

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After briefly remarking on previous treatments of empathy in the philosophical and psychological literature, I outline Stein's treatment of this concept in *On the Problem of Empathy* and *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, illustrating the problematic breadth of her application of the term 'empathy,' a breadth that Stein herself calls to our attention. After a brief discussion of Stein's treatment of empathy and the experience of value, I turn to certain features of Roman Ingarden's analyses of aesthetic experience found in *The Literary Work of Art* and *The Cognition of the Work of Art* that deal with what he refers to as the reader's 'emotional coexperience' of situations and events represented in the work of art. I conclude by comparing Stein's account of empathy with Ingarden's account of aesthetic experience, both of which deal at length with the subjective activities of "feeling with" and emotional coexperience.

Key words: empathy, aesthetic experience, aesthetic value, emotional coexperiencing, personal values, psychology, phenomenology, Edith Stein, Roman Ingarden.

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ЭМПАТИЯ И ЭМОЦИОНАЛЬНОЕ СО-ПЕРЕЖИВАНИЕ В ЭСТЕТИЧЕСКОМ ОПЫТЕ

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После сжатого обзора предшествующих интерпретаций понятия вчувствования (эмпатии) в философской и психологической литературе, я собираюсь очертить трактовку этого понятия в работах Эдит Штайн «К проблеме вчувствования» и «Философия психологии и гуманитарных наук», показав при этом проблематичную широту применения термина «эмпатия» — широту, на которую обращает наше внимание и сама Штайн. Кратко остановившись на понимании эмпатии и переживания ценности у Штайн, я обращаюсь к некоторым особенностям анализа эстетического опыта в работах Романа Ингардена «Литературное произведение» и «Познание произведения искусства», которые имеют дело с тем, что он называет «эмоциональным переживанием» читателем представленных в произведении искусства ситуаций и событий. В заключении я сравниваю понимание эмпатии у Штайн с пониманием эстетического опыта у Ингардена: оба они тесно связаны с субъективной деятельностью «совместного чувства» и эмоциональным сопереживанием.

Ключевые слова: эмпатия, эстетический опыт, эстетическая ценность, эмоциональное сопереживание, личные ценности, психология, феноменология, Эдит Штайн, Роман Ингарден.

1. THE CONCEPT OF EMPATHY IN EARLY 20TH-CENTURY PSYCHOLOGY AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Despite its having been the topic of discussion and analysis for more than a century, the concept of empathy remains as desperately unclear now as it was when the discussion began¹. Our English term was coined by Edward Titchener in 1909 as the translation of the German *Einfühlung*, which had been coined by Rudolf Hermann Lotze in his *Mikrokosmos* (1858) as the translation of the ancient Greek *ἐμπάθεια*, which meant “physical affection,” or “passion”². The German term quickly entered the technical vocabulary of late-nineteenth-century German philosophy and psychology,

¹ See Koss (2006) and Zahavi (2014) for reliable historical summaries and extensive references to the literature.

² The Greek *πάσχω*, *pascho*, is the root of the Latin *passus*, as well as the English “passive,” and “passion.” The ancient Greek and Latin verbs mean “to suffer, be affected by, be influenced by passion or feeling.” (It is interesting to add that in contemporary [modern] Greek, *empathia* has come to mean “animosity, ill will.”)

being employed by Robert Vischer, Theodor Lipps, and Johannes Volkelt³—but now in a quite different sense. In *Mikrokosmos* Lotze seems to have been describing a sympathetic reaction to, or an experience of being acted upon and physiologically affected by, some quality or qualities inhering in an external object. This is the sort of physical, spatially located *empathia* that Galen, for example, spoke of. Vischer, however, described *Einfühlung* in quite different terms, placing far more emphasis on the emotional, psychological and spiritual features of the experience. As Juliet Koss explains: “Vischer used the term to describe the viewer’s active perceptual engagement with a work of art. [...] Physical, emotional, and psychological, the process of *Einfühlung* placed the spectator at the center of aesthetic discourse” (Koss, 2006, 139)⁴. Theodor Lipps further developed the nature of this engagement by identifying it as primarily an act of projection, which occurs not only in our encounter with works of art but in all of our encounters, be they with artworks, nature, other people, or what have you.

Lotze, Vischer and Lipps were engaged in quite different projects, and we obviously cannot be concerned here with detailed discussion of their many differences. But their respective views on empathy—especially that offered by Lipps—exhibit a few distinctive features that will prove of importance to our following examination of the aesthetic experience. We can easily see at the outset that Vischer differentiates his view from Lotze’s with respect to what Koss has referred to as “the viewer’s active perceptual engagement”; in other words, unlike Lotze’s passive recipient of external stimuli, Vischer’s spectator is actively engaging with the work, not just standing by as an idle spectator. Lipps too stressed the active character of empathy, but Lipps took a significant step further when he proceeded to analyze empathy as an explicitly *cognitive* act that involves a ‘natural instinct’ to *imitate* others and to *express* ourselves. As Lipps explains in the description of empathy that he offered in *Leitfaden der Psycho-*

³ Robert Vischer used the term „*Einfühlung*“ in his 1873 PhD dissertation, *Über das optische Formgefühl: Ein Beitrag zur Ästhetik* [On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics]. The Munich psychologist Theodor Lipps employed the term in his *Leitfaden der Psychologie* (1903) and other works, including his two-part *Ästhetik* (1903 & 1906). The philosopher Johannes Volkelt, in his three-volume *System der Ästhetik* (1905–1914) adopted the term from Lipps (speaking also of „*Einempfindung*“ as distinct from „*Einfühlung*“ [see note 9 below]). It was in the 1909 book, *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of the Thought Processes*, that the English psychologist Edward Bradford Titchener translated „*Einfühlung*“ into English as “empathy.”

⁴ In her opening paragraph Koss offers this helpful observation: “Frequently conflated with sympathy or compassion, empathy usually signifies a process of emotional and psychological projection. More specifically, it can refer to the concept of *Einfühlung* — literally, the activity of ‘feeling into’ — that was developed in late-nineteenth-century Germany in the overlapping fields of philosophical aesthetics, perceptual psychology, optics, and art and architectural history to describe an embodied response to an image, object, or spatial environment” (Koss, 2006, 139).

logie: “My understanding of the life-expressions [*Lebensäußerungen*] of another has its ground in, on the one hand, the instinctive drive to imitation and, on the other hand, the instinctive drive to express [*äußern*] my own psychic experiences in a particular manner.” Lipps adds (on the last paragraph of the same page): “In every case [...] I experience the affect or its drive to consummation as directly bound to or belonging to the perceived gesture. That is, it is *felt into* the gesture [*Er ist in die Gebärde eingefühlt*]” (Lipps, 1903, 193).

The descriptions of empathy offered by Lipps differ in detail in his various accounts, but we can outline the basic picture, at least in part, that emerges from them as follows⁵: When I observe another behaving in a manner that suggests to me some visceral or emotional significance—that is, when I witness the “life-expression” of another’s experience of joy, sorrow, pain, pleasure, etc.—that suggestive expression “infuses” into me (as Hume might say)⁶ a corresponding affect. This “infusion” is in fact the product of a two-fold, natural instinctive drive (*instinktiver Trieb*) that both enables and compels me first to imitate inwardly that suggestion and then to express outwardly the significant content of that suggestion. This outward expression is achieved not by means of any physical or gestural act on my part, but through my

⁵ A thorough and consistent summary of Lipps’s position may well be impossible, for his use of terminology is inconsistent, and his analyses are repetitive and often seem to be circular. Ingarden appears to have come to a similar conclusion. In a note in *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (203, n31), he writes: “Lipps means by ‘empathy’ [*Einfühlung*] very diverse phenomena and subjective activities, which he does not distinguish from one another. It is not possible to sort this out here.” Wilhelm Worringer presented what I’ve found to be the most helpful exposition of Lipps’s position, but it fails in the end to present that position as entirely coherent; it’s about two pages long and consists largely of quotations taken from Lipps’s 1905 paper, “Empathy and Aesthetic Pleasure.” See Worringer (1997), *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1997); passages quoted from (Rader, 1952, 444–446).

⁶ As Zahavi notes in *Self & Other*: “Incidentally, Lipps might have been influenced by Hume’s account since it was Lipps who translated Hume’s *A Treatise of Human Nature* into German” (Zahavi, 2014, 103, n2). Regarding “infused,” see David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, Part I, Section XI: “Of the love of fame”: “A good-natured man finds himself in an instant of the same humour with his company; and even the proudest and most surly take a tincture from their countrymen and acquaintance. A cheerful countenance infuses a sensible complacency and serenity into my mind; as an angry or sorrowful one throws a sudden damp upon me. Hatred, resentment, esteem, love, courage, mirth and melancholy; all these passions I feel more from communication than from my own natural temper and disposition. So remarkable a phaenomenon merits our attention, and must be traced up to its first principles.

When any affection is infused by sympathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it. This idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection.”

act of projecting that significant content into the physical or gestural behavior of the other; this is what is meant by “feeling the emotion into the gesture” of the other. This entire psychological process is what Lipps refers to as “empathy,” and he further claims that this is “positive empathy” when it is in accord with my nature, and “negative empathy” when it is opposed to my nature. When it is a case of positive empathy, I may experience what Lipps calls “complete empathy” in the “consummation” of the projection; that is, I may immerse myself in the visceral or emotional significance of the projection to such an extent that the distinction between myself and the other vanishes, and a loss of the self and “oneness” with the other are achieved.

In her PhD dissertation, *On the Problem of Empathy*, Edith Stein described Lipps as the one “who has achieved the most toward our goal” of explaining how such objects “as the psycho-physical individual, personality, etc., arise within consciousness” (Stein, 1964, 35)⁷, yet she at the same time found his achievement to be limited. As she explains (in the sentences immediately following the one just quoted):

He seems to be bound by the phenomenon of the expression of experiences. [...] With a few words he lays aside the profusion of questions present in the treatment of this

⁷ Stein offers many relevant details regarding both Lipps and Husserl in her autobiographical *Life in a Jewish Family*. For example: “Now the question needed to be settled: what did I want to work on [in her PhD dissertation]? I had no difficulty in this. In his course on nature and spirit [in the summer semester of 1913], Husserl had said that an objective outer world could only be experienced intersubjectively, i.e., through a plurality of perceiving individuals who relate in a mutual exchange of information. Accordingly, an experience of other individuals is a prerequisite. Husserl named this experience *Einfühlung*, in connection to the works of Theodor Lipps, but he didn’t speak about what it consists of. Here was a lacuna to be filled; therefore, I wished to examine what empathy might be. The Master found this suggestion not bad at all. However, almost immediately, I was given another bitter pill to swallow: he required that, as format for the dissertation, I use that of analytical dialogue with Theodor Lipps. He liked to have students clarify, in their assignments, the relation of phenomenology to the other significant directions current in philosophy. This was not *his forte*. He was too occupied with his own thoughts to take time for comparative study of others. And whenever he demanded that of us, he found us as unwilling. He used to say, with a smile: ‘I educate my students to be systematic philosophers and then I’m surprised that they dislike any tasks that have to do with the history of philosophy.’

At first he was inexorable. Though it went against the grain, I had to make a thorough study of the long list of works by Theodor Lipps” (Stein, 1986, 269–270; I have slightly revised Josephine Koeppl’s translation of the German). “Often I spent a great part of the day [in the winter semester of 1914] in the philosophical seminar room, studying the works of Theodor Lipps. [...] I read book after book, taking copious notes; and the more material I gathered, the more awl was my head. What Husserl, judging by his brief indications, thought of as ‘empathy’ and what Lipps designated as such apparently had little in common. For Lipps it was the concept point-blank at the center of his philosophy; it ruled his aesthetics, ethics, and social philosophy; and it also played a role in his theory of knowledge, logic, and metaphysics” (Stein, 1986, 277).

problem. For instance, he says about the conveyor of these phenomena of expression, “We believe a conscious life to be bound to certain bodies by virtue of an ‘inexplicable adjustment of our mind’ or a ‘natural instinct.’”

This is nothing more than the proclamation of wonder, declaring the bankruptcy of scientific investigation. And if science is not permitted to do this, then especially not philosophy. (Stein, 1964, 35)

Stein rejected Lipps’s recourse to “natural instinct” as an explanation of how our consciousness comes to be linked to our bodies, for it struck her as scientifically and philosophically illegitimate: Lipps was attempting to describe the *explanandum* by reference to an inexplicable *explanans*. Moreover, by locating that inexplicable *explanans* in the individual person’s nature (*Wesen*), Lipps was identifying the origin of personal identity as lying exclusively in the individual subject; that is, the role of the other in the development of the subject’s experienced individuality is minimized, if not entirely denied. Stein’s own account will do just the opposite.

In the opening chapter of *On the Problem of Empathy*, “The Essence of Acts of Empathy,” Stein proceeds to construct her own account of empathy by criticizing Lipps on several points, all of which seem to follow from his view of the act of empathy as consisting essentially in “projection.” According to Lipps’s account, I am capable of accurately recognizing the behavior or gesture of another as the life-expression of a particular affective state (a particular emotion, passion, pain, etc.), and thereby to experience the innate drive to imitate it (i.e. to *feel* it) and to express it in my own behavior or gesture (smile, grimace, etc.), and then to project it (to *feel it into*) the other, only if I have myself previously experienced that affective state. In short, if I haven’t already experienced a particular affective state, I won’t be able to “recognize” it in another. Lipps fully embraces this conclusion. As Zahavi observes: “Consequently, it shouldn’t really come as a surprise that Lipps repeatedly speaks of other individuals as multiplications of one’s own ego, that is, as products of empathic self-objectification” (Zahavi, 2014, 105)⁸. Zahavi also provides us with the perfect passage from Lipps’s 1905 book, *Die ethischen Grundfragen*:

The other psychological individual is consequently made by myself out of myself. His inner being is taken from mine. The other individual or ego is the product of a projection, a reflection, a radiation of myself—or of what I experience in myself, through the sense perception of an outside physical phenomenon—into this very sensory phenomenon, a peculiar kind of reduplication of myself. (Lipps, 1905, 17)

Stein found such an egocentric account simply incomprehensible. In the second chapter of her book, Stein describes in detail the many stages of development

⁸ Zahavi cites (Lipps, 1907, 360).

comprising “The Constitution of the Psycho-Physical Individual.” In the course of this development, empathy too evolves in complexity, from its earliest appearance as “sensual empathy” to its culmination as “the basis of intersubjective experience” and, thereby, “the condition of possible knowledge of the existing outer world.” A brief discussion of that early form of empathy will help us recognize the depth and subtlety of Stein’s view (especially in contrast to those offered by her predecessors). Stein begins her discussion of “The Conditions of the Possibility of Sensual Empathy” with an examination of this earliest form of empathy as follows⁹:

The possibility of sensual empathy (“a sensing-in,” we should say to be exact) is warranted [i] by the interpretation of our own living body as a physical body and our own physical body as a living body by virtue of the fusion of outer and bodily perception, [ii] by the possible change in position of this body in space, and finally [iii] by the possibility of the variation in imagination of its real composition while retaining its type. (Stein, 1964, 54)

One of Stein’s German terms here is an allusion to Johannes Volkelt (Stein, 1917, 65): “sensual empathy [*Empfindungseinfühlung*] (‘a sensing-in’ [*Einempfindung*], we should say to be exact) [...]” *Einempfindung* (as I mention in note 2) was a term used Volkelt used in his three-volume *System der Ästhetik* (1905–1914), distinguishing it from *Einfühlung*. As Stein will proceed to explain two pages later:

As we already noted, this basic level of constitution has always been ignored so far. Volkelt goes into “sensing-in” in various ways, but he briefly characterizes it as the reproduction of sensation and does not explore its own essence. Neither does he consider its meaning for the constitution of the individual, only considering it as an aid to the occurrence of what he alone designates as empathy. This is the empathizing of feelings and especially of moods. He does not want to call sensation [*Einempfindung*, ‘sensing-in’]¹⁰ empathy because, if empathy stopped at sensations, it would be “something frankly pitiful and lamentable.” We do not want to impute this to empathy by any means. On the other hand, our preceding demonstrations show that sensations cannot be assessed quite so narrowly. (Stein, 1964, 56 / 1917, 67–68)

What Stein is basically arguing in these passages, and in fact throughout the remainder of this chapter of her book, is that the term “empathy” is best understood as referring to “The grasping of foreign experiences [*das Erfassen fremder Erlebnisse*]—be they sensations, feelings, or what not,” and this “grasping” of another’s experiences

⁹ I have modified Waltraut Stein’s translation; I have also added the numbers in square brackets.

¹⁰ The mistranslation of *Einempfindung* (“sensing-in”) as “sensation” (*Empfindung*) slightly confuses the meaning of Stein’s sentence. Stein is saying that Volkelt refused to identify “sensing-in” as empathy, because this would imply that empathy was exclusively a kind of sensing, or “sensation”; if this were the case, empathizing of feelings and moods would be impossible.

“is a unified, typical, even though diversely differentiated modification of consciousness.” Since this “grasping” requires a name, Stein has “selected the already customary term ‘empathy’ for some of these phenomena,” and she adds: “Should one desire to retain this for the narrower domain, then he must coin a new expression for the broader one” (Stein, 1964, 56). In short, for Stein, “empathy” refers to an entire complex of acts of consciousness that grasp an enormous variety of “foreign” experiences, ranging from sense experience (the initial appearance of which involves the “foreignness” of the physical body to the living body), through passion, emotion and feeling, to the contemplation of ideas, the experience of wonder and awe, and the recognition of value. It has not often been pointed out that Stein’s view of empathy is in this sense quite similar to that of Lipps: Both thinkers describe empathy—or more precisely, a wide spectrum of instances of different, significantly distinct acts of empathy—as operative at every level of human consciousness (for Stein) or cognition (for Lipps).

2. STEIN ON EMPATHY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF VALUE

Bearing in mind that, according to Stein, at the social level the object of our act of empathy is the other’s experience, not the *object* of the other’s experience, how does this act proceed in the case of another’s experience of value? Or more significantly, how could it possibly proceed in the case of another’s experience of a value that I have not myself recognized, a value that itself is foreign to me? Stein deals with this issue in the concluding pages of the third and final chapter of *On the Problem of Empathy* (Stein, 1964, 104–105)¹¹. After remarking that “In principle, all foreign experience permitting itself to be derived from my own personal structure can be fulfilled,” she adds that “I cannot fulfill what conflicts with my own experiential structure.” Nevertheless, “I can still have it given in the manner of empty presentation.” Stein then offers this intriguing illustration:

I can be skeptical myself and still understand that another sacrifices all his earthly goods to his faith. I see him behave in this way and empathize a value experiencing as the motive for his conduct¹². The correlate of this is not accessible to me, causing me to ascribe to him a personal level I do not myself possess. In this way I empathically gain the type of *homo religiosus* by nature foreign to me, and I understand it even though what newly confronts me here will always remain unfulfilled. (Stein, 1964, 104–105)

¹¹ This chapter, “Empathy as the Comprehension of Mental Persons,” offers several extraordinarily rich phenomenological observations regarding value, all of which deserve lengthy discussion that we cannot pursue here.

¹² Stein’s German in this sentence recalls Lipps’s use of the verb *empfinden*: „Ich sehe, daß er so handelt und fühle ihm als Motiv seines Handelns ein Wertnehmen ein...“ (Stein, 1917, 129).

If I'm an unbeliever and have no personal experience (and therefore no "experiential structure") of faith, when I witness another whom I understand to be sacrificing all his earthly goods to his faith, I interpret his behavior as motivated by a value experiencing. That value itself, however—which is the correlate of his behavior—I cannot comprehend, and I ascribe to the other a personal level (*eine personale Schicht*) which I myself do not possess. In other words, while I can understand what the other is doing, I cannot fully comprehend the meaning of what he is doing—that is to say, I do not recognize its *value*. Nevertheless, I have become aware of both its presence and its power in motivating behavior that appears to be of value to others. And as Stein will explain further:

By empathy with differently composed personal structures we become clear on what we are not, what we are more or less with others. [...] Since the experience of value is basic to our own value, at the same time as new values are acquired by empathy, our own unfamiliar values become visible. When we empathically run into ranges of value locked into us, we become conscious of our own deficiency or disvalue. Every grasping of different persons can become the basis of a value comparison. [...] We learn to see that we experience ourselves as having more or less value in comparison with others. (Stein, 1964, 105)

We can more deeply appreciate the significance of Stein's illustration when we read that it seems to allude to her own personal experience, as we see in account of the influence Scheler exercised on her thinking during her time in Göttingen. She recounts that Scheler had recently returned to the Catholic Church, and "he was quite full of Catholic ideas at the time" (Stein, 1986, 260). This was, she tells us, her "first encounter with this hitherto totally unknown world," and while it did not yet lead her to "the Faith," "it did open for [her] a region of 'phenomena' which [she] could then no longer bypass blindly."

The barriers of rationalistic prejudices with which I had unwittingly grown up fell, and the world of faith unfolded before me. Persons with whom I associated daily, whom I esteemed and admired, lived in it. At the least, they deserved my giving it some serious reflection. For the time being, I did not embark on a systematic investigation of the questions of faith [...]. I was content to accept without resistance the stimuli coming from my surroundings, and so, almost without noticing it, became gradually transformed. (Stein, 1986, 260–261)

So we see that such "gradual transformation" proceeds largely by way of our empathic grasping of another's value experiencing, and that empathy is a necessary condition of our recognition and assimilation of those highest ethical and religious values upon which our societies are themselves grounded. We become members of a

social world when we discover and appropriate the values that define and make possible that world. And these same values also play a constitutive role in the world of the work of art.

3. EMPATHY AND VALUES BELONGING TO THE WORLD OF THE WORK OF ART

In *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, Stein remarks that “personal values, like all values in general (the existential values excepted) have substance independently of the existence of their carrier. They can be experienced in fictive carriers just as well as in real carriers, and either way they deploy their full efficacy in the experiencing individual” (Stein, 2000, 216)¹³. When we read a novel or watch a film, we may understand the behavior of the “fictive” characters represented in the work as being motivated by, or being consistent with, the same “real,” substantially existing values that we find operative in our real world. But Stein is saying more than that. She is arguing that a work of art may present to us new and entirely unfamiliar values. Stein does not explain at any length how the work of art might be capable of doing this, or of precisely what conditions must be met in order to render this possible. As she explained in a letter to Ingarden (dated 27 April 1917), she “saw the whole thing merely as a plan [*ein Schema*]” that she “would fulfill in the course of [her] lifetime” (Stein, 1993, 16), and while she did fill out a good deal of this “schema” in the two treatises comprised in her 1922 work, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (Stein, 2000), neither of these treatises deals with aesthetic experience¹⁴. Given the impor-

¹³ The passage continues: “Those values correspond to attitudes whose contents have an invigorating power intrinsic to them. The beauty of a figure that I behold ignites in me the enthusiasm that spurs me to artistic creation. The hero of an epic poem fills me with admiration, and out of that admiration the urge wells up to emulate him. In both cases the experienced values are not only motives that prescribe the direction of my deed, but at the same time they furnish the propellant power that it requires” (Stein, 2000, 216).

¹⁴ The first treatise, “Sentient Causality,” attempts “to work out plainly the twofold basic lawfulness—causality and motivation—operating together within one sentient subject with a sensuous-mental essence”; the second treatise, “Individual and Community,” “broadens the consideration from the isolated sentient individual to super-individual realities, and thereby seeks to attain broader insights into the composition of the mental cosmos” (Stein, 2000, 1). Ingarden cites the former treatise (along with works by Husserl and Geiger) in his *Literary Work of Art* (Ingarden, 1973a, 272, n. 21) with specific “regard to the difference between ‘internal’ and ‘immanent’ perception”; four notes later, Ingarden writes: “It is only the investigations performed by the phenomenologists (Pfänder, Scheler, Geiger, E. Stein), as well as by some tendencies in psychoanalysis, which have again opened the way for studying what is psychic in the true sense” (Ingarden, 1973a, 273, n. 25).

tance that Ingarden will accord to value in the creation and co-creation of the world of the work of art, and to the role that aesthetic experience plays in our moral and spiritual development as individuals in a community of shared values (the importance of which Stein herself suggested), Ingarden's further exploration of this topic comes as no surprise. It is also not surprising to find that key features of Ingarden's account bear a remarkable similarity to features found not only in Stein's account of empathy, but also in the descriptions of aesthetic experience offered by Volkelt and Lipps.

Ingarden presented his most extensive and detailed account of aesthetic experience in *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*. In Chapter 4 of that work, "Varieties of the Cognition of the Literary Work of Art," Ingarden offers two notes that situate his own position with respect to Thomas Vischer, Theodor Lipps, and Johannes Volkelt (curiously making no mention of Stein):

In his *System der Ästhetik*, 3 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1905-14; 2nd ed. 1925-27), Johannes Volkelt speaks of a "supplementation" [*Ergänzen*] in the aesthetic experience of "real sensation" [*wirkliche Empfindungen*] by "representational sensations" [*vorgestellte Empfindungen*]. He speaks in this connection of an "empathy" [*Einempfindung*] and of a "seeing in addition to what is there" [*Mitsehen*]. It seems to me that both are closely connected with the facts I have described here. (Ingarden, 1973b, 182, n. 8)

The term here translated as "empathy" is *Einempfindung*, which we have translated earlier as "sensing-in." Stein uses this term when speaking of the earliest (or at the least a very early) appearance of empathy: The fusion of outer and bodily perception giving rise to "the interpretation of our own living body as a physical body and our own physical body as a living body" makes possible (and perhaps gives rise to) "sensing-in" [*Einempfindung*], which Volkelt actually distinguished from *Einfühlung* proper (see our note 10), but which Stein wants to identify as a primitive, perhaps original, form of empathy. Ingarden is claiming in the above passage that Volkelt's and Stein's concept of "sensing-in"—as well as the concept of *Mitsehen*, i.e., "seeing-with," or "seeing" something non-sensible along with that which is sensibly given—is consistent with the view that he is presenting. A note that Ingarden offers almost forty pages later returns to this topic of sensation and empathy, now going a step further:

The existence of numerous theories of "empathy" advanced in Germany from Fr. Th. Vischer to Theodor Lipps and Johannes Volkelt in order to solve the problems which the aesthetic experience posed at that time for scholars is proof that this "sensory" perceptibility of certain works of art is to be taken with a grain of salt. That does not mean that I advocate these various theories of empathy. All that is "perceivable by the senses"—even in all "plastic" art—is merely the physical thing which constitutes the ontic foundation of the work of art, hence the "painting" in contradistinction to the "picture." (Ingarden, 1973b, 220, n. 47)

While Ingarden does not himself “advocate” the theories of empathy promoted by Lipps and Volkelt, he cites them as indicative of the dissatisfaction of these authors with the view, expressed by Tatarkiewicz among others, that the work of art “is simply given to us in sense perception.” Ingarden obviously shares their dissatisfaction, maintaining that what is given to us in sense perception is neither the aesthetic object nor even the work of art, but simply the ontic foundation of the work of art, the initial encounter with which gives rise to our aesthetic experience of the work of art. As Ingarden describes this: “In order to apprehend the work of art, we must always go beyond the sense perception which serves as a point of departure and beyond the real things given in sense perception and, through a transition to the aesthetic attitude, allow the aesthetic object to be constituted” (Ingarden, 1973b, 221)¹⁵. In the course of that experience, while our sense perception provides us access to the material ontic foundation of the work, our access to the work of art requires some other means of cognitive access, and one that Ingarden has now suggested might be “closely connected” to the *Einempfindung* and *Mitsehen* he spoke of in the preceding note. And indeed, “sensing-in” and “seeing-with” do play a central role in aesthetic experience as Ingarden describes it.

Our aesthetic experience is most fundamentally conditioned by two key elements, the first being the “objective” ontic material foundation of the work—the physical text, for example, or the painted canvas—and the second being the “subjective” condition consisting in our adoption of an “aesthetic attitude,” to the unique nature of which belongs what Ingarden calls “the disposition of reality acceptance.” As he explains in *The Literary Work of Art*:

It is precisely this disposition for a reality acceptance that never reaches serious consummation, that is always held back at the last moment, as it were, that forms the special nature of the aesthetic attitude and carries with it that unique stimulation we get from dealing with works of art in general and with literary works in particular. (Ingarden, 1973a, 342)

This disposition has traditionally been referred to as “the suspension of disbelief” in the non-reality of the world represented in the work of art. It is this suspension of disbelief which makes it possible for us to accept, and to be affected by, the actions, events and situations that are being presented to us as real in the world represented in

¹⁵ Ingarden focuses on this issue in *Cognition*’s lengthy (42-page) §24: “The aesthetic experience and the aesthetic attitude.” For a defense of the notion of the aesthetic attitude against recent criticism—in particular, that offered by George Dickie in his widely republished paper, “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude” (Dickie, 1964)—see Mitscherling (1988).

the work of art. It has been widely recognized by theorists as a fundamental feature of at least some varieties of aesthetic experience since it was introduced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* of 1817, and it has also been connected with sympathy since that time. Coleridge spoke of this feature as resting on the condition of what he identified as “the two cardinal points of poetry,” which are “the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination”¹⁶ (Coleridge, 1817). When Coleridge and William Wordsworth agreed to collaborate on the project of *Lyrical Ballads*, they divided their respective tasks into two sorts of poetry. Coleridge was tasked with one sort, which would deal with supernatural “incidents and agents” and would aim at “the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real.” And Wordsworth was tasked with a second sort of poetry, dealing with subjects “chosen from ordinary life” and with everyday “characters and incidents.” Wordsworth “was to propose himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural” by directing the mind “to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us...” (Coleridge, 1817). Coleridge’s work, on the other hand, was to “be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.” “Exciting the sympathy of the reader” was of primary importance to Wordsworth and Coleridge, for this made possible the “transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth” into the “shadows of imagination” that in turn made the reality of their represented world believable to us. Wordsworth and Coleridge recognized, in short, that it is the realistic representation of characters with whom we can sympathize that makes possible our acceptance of the “reality” of the poetically represented world. And this “sympathy,” it seems, is itself conditioned by the presence and the power of the values belonging to the work being experienced.

¹⁶ Coleridge is here recalling conversations that he and William Wordsworth shared from 1797 to 1798 while neighbors in Nether Stowey, a village in South West England. In 1798 Coleridge and Wordsworth published the first edition of their co-authored *Lyrical Ballads*, containing 19 poems by Wordsworth and 4 poems by Coleridge (including his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*). The date of the publication of this work is taken to mark the beginning of the romantic period in English literature.

4. EMPATHY AS EMOTIONAL COEXPERIENCING IN OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WORK OF ART

As we saw above, according to Stein we become members of a social world when we discover and appropriate the values that define and make possible that world. Stein also maintained that “personal values, like all values in general (the existential values excepted) have substance independently of the existence of their carrier. They can be experienced in fictive carriers just as well as in real carriers, and either way they deploy their full efficacy in the experiencing individual” (Stein, 2000, 216). She explains further:

Those values correspond to attitudes whose contents have an invigorating power intrinsic to them. The beauty of a figure that I behold ignites in me the enthusiasm that spurs me to artistic creation. The hero of an epic poem fills me with admiration, and out of that admiration the urge wells up to emulate him. In both cases the experienced values are not only motives that prescribe the direction of my deed, but at the same time they furnish the propellant power that it requires. (Stein, 2000, 216)

The sort of values we are speaking of are those which, as we saw above, Stein called “personal values,” which “can be experienced in fictive carriers just as well as in real carriers, and either way they deploy their full efficacy in the experiencing individual” (Stein, 2000, 216). Such “personal values” play a large role in Ingarden’s aesthetics as well. These are the values belonging to the persons represented in the work of art, whose characters are exhibited through their actions and behavior in given situations. While Ingarden may have disagreed with Stein on the question of the substantiality and ontological independence of values, he appears to agree with her entirely on the constitutive role played by value in the establishing of social reality, be this the reality of the “real world” or that of the world of the work of art. As he explains in *The Cognition of the Work of Art*:

But as soon as the act of empathy is performed, there takes place that strange direct intercourse or companionship with the imagined person and his condition. Feelings arise in us which are very similar to the feelings we would have if we were close to such a person and his states in reality. These acts of emotional coexperiencing [*des emotionalen Mitlebens*] are the first form of the emotional response of the aesthetically experiencing subject [*des ästhetisch erlebenden Subjekts*] to the constituted aesthetic object. (Ingarden, 1973b, 203)

Stein insisted that in our act of empathy we do not experience *the object* of another’s experience but, rather, we experience *the other’s experiencing* of that object. Ingarden shifts the focus of Stein’s analyses in *On the Problem of Empathy*: Instead

of speaking of a subject encountering another subject whose attention is directed at some “object,” Ingarden speaks of our emotionally coexperiencing with the portrayed persons various psychological occurrences; for example, emotional responses to evocative events or situations in which these persons, and I along with them, find themselves.

As Ingarden explains, when we engage aesthetically in the recreative process of the concretization of the various schematized elements belonging to a complex work of art, such as a lengthy novel, we find ourselves intimately involved in the hermeneutic task of fulfilling aspects of that work which the author had left unfulfilled and thereby open to any number of possible actualizations. We flesh out the unfulfilled aspects by inserting features or elements drawn from our own experience and determined at least in part by our own prejudices—that is, our personal likes and dislikes, fears and desires, and so on. Basically, we inject a part of ourselves into the work as we concretize it, thereby assuring that the work possesses a personal significance for each one of us, and turning the work into a mirror of sorts: All of us readers see ourselves individually reflected in it because each of us has contributed something to its constitution and full concretization, and a major part of our individual contributions will commonly be evaluative or value-laden¹⁷.

As readers we’ve already invested ourselves in the cocreation of the world of the work, and this means that we find it both personally significant and familiar at a very deep level—that is to say, even if we’re reading a novel set on an alien planet at some time far in the past or in the distant future, our own contribution as cocreators of the world of that work will guarantee that it contains sufficient familiar elements to render it habitable for us; that is, it will be world that we could imagine ourselves as living in. Such a familiar, habitable world invites the reader to engage emotionally with whatever situations might arise within it, and to do so quite unconsciously and without pause or hesitation. It is this familiarity of the world of the work that enables the reader to immerse herself so completely, not as idle spectator but as personally engaged participant, in the actions and affairs, as well as the emotional responses and states of mind, of the characters represented in the work. The reader comes to engage (as far as this is possible) in the same activities, and adopt the same emotional attitudes and responses, as do the persons portrayed in the work.

As we observed in the opening paragraph of this paper, whereas Vischer used the term *Einfühlung* in describing the viewer’s active perceptual engagement the work

¹⁷ See Ingarden’s discussion of “the values revealed in the aesthetic experience” (Ingarden, 1973b, 213).

of art as proceeding at the physical, emotional, and psychological levels, Lipps further developed the concept of *Einfühlung* by identifying it as, most essentially, an act of projection. With regard to the empathy we might feel toward a person (real or fictional), Lipps maintained that this act consists in our projecting ourselves into that person and subsequently identifying the emotion being experienced by that person as identical with the emotion we are feeling. In short, we *feel* our emotion *into* the person with whom we empathize. Both Stein and Ingarden reject this view, and while Stein's observations on empathy extend across a wide range of quite different sorts of experience—from an originary encounter with our own body as “foreign” to the higher social orders of intersubjective participation in community—her basic description of the experience of intersubjective activity is far closer to Ingarden's description than has commonly been acknowledged. The chief difference between their analyses lies in Ingarden's not having employed the term “empathy” in reference to so many different sorts of experience, and this may have been due simply to the difference in the trajectories of their research: Whereas Stein's research was initially focused on “the problems emerging one by one in the literature on empathy before [her]: aesthetic empathy, empathy as the cognitive source of foreign experience, ethical empathy, etc.” (Stein, 1964, 3), Ingarden encountered the concept of empathy in the course of his analyses of the ontology and epistemology of works of art. And one fundamental feature—perhaps *the* fundamental feature—of the act of empathy is acknowledged and similarly described by both of them: namely, it always proceeds as a kind of *coexperience*.

We must stress again that this is not “projection” in the sense in which Lipps used the term. We're not projecting ourselves into the person portrayed in the work of art. We are projecting ourselves into the *situation* represented in the world of the work, and we are co-experiencing the same emotion as the portrayed person who is located in that same position. This co-experiencing is an intersubjective act, i.e., an action performed by more than one subject in which the plurality of agents together constitute the single subjectivity, “we.” The “I” does not project itself into the “she,” nor does the “I” replace the “she.” Rather, the “I” and the “she,” through their participation in the same activity, become the “higher unity,” “we”¹⁸.

¹⁸ See Stein (1964, 17): “Let us go back to sympathy with foreign experience. We said that the ‘I’ in co-experiencing another is turned toward the object of the foreign experience, that it has the foreign experience present empathically at the same time [...]. Now let us modify this case somewhat [...]. Now I intuitively have before me what they feel. It comes to life in my feeling, and from the ‘I’ and ‘you’ arises the ‘we’ as a subject of a higher grade.”

We are now in a position better to understand the following passage from *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*:

It was once very common to speak of “empathy [*Einfühlung*],” and perhaps this could be applied in the cognition of persons portrayed in literature, if there is actually such a thing as empathy [*Einfühlung*]. Basically, it is here more a matter of feeling along with [*Mitfühlen*] the people portrayed for us, hence of a certain sympathy [*Sympathie*] with them. In any case, it is no purely intellectual or mental act and also no mere mental image, but an experience in which the element of feeling [*das Moment des Fühlens*], as well as the element of an emotional coexperiencing [*das Moment des gefühlsmäßigen Miterlebens*] of psychological occurrences along with the portrayed persons, plays an essential role. (Ingarden, 1973b, 237)

In his note 31 to the “Varieties of Cognition” chapter (part of which we cited in our note 5 above), Ingarden observes: “Lipps means by ‘empathy’ [*Einfühlung*] very diverse phenomena and subjective activities, which he does not distinguish from one another. It is not possible to sort this out here. I should like, however, to emphasize that, when I speak of ‘empathy’ here, I mean only one kind of the facts which Lipps covers with this expression.” Given that he agreed with Stein that the “subjective activities” of “feeling with,” and sympathy, and emotional coexperience do in fact take place, both in our real-world encounters in the social world and in our aesthetic engagements with works of art, it is reasonable to suppose that here, in adding the condition “if there is actually such a thing as empathy,” Ingarden is speaking of the term as it had once been commonly employed in imprecise reference to “very diverse phenomena and subjective activities”¹⁹. Emotional coexperience is central to both Stein’s examination of empathy and Ingarden’s examination of the aesthetic experience, and their respective analyses are perhaps most profitably to be read as complementing one another.

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¹⁹ Stein acknowledged that her use of the “customary term” *Einfühlung* was broad; see Stein (1964, 56), Chapter 3, section 5, (c) “The Consequence of Sensual Empathy and its Absence in the Literature on Empathy under Discussion.” She argued that “The grasping of foreign experiences—be they sensations, feelings, or what not—is a unified, typical, even though diversely differentiated modification of consciousness and requires a uniform name.”

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