

Critique of Interaction Theory based Concepts of Empathy

Introduction

Whereas in Theory of Mind based approaches empathy bridges the presupposed principal gap between two individuals, Interaction Theory approaches claim different forms of direct connectedness between individuals, which can be used to explore the experience of others in dialogical communication. While in Theory of Mind empathy is meant to produce identical or at least similar experiences of others in a first person by reconstruction or simulation, in Interaction Theory approaches empathy is not restricted to such similar experiences, but includes corresponding feelings of a first person as well, as long as they are directed at the other in a certain way.

In this essay I describe different positions on the principal separation or connectedness of individuals, and Theory of Mind as well as Interaction Theory based approaches on empathy. Following Interaction Theory, I raise the question, what remains of the original meaning of empathy as *feeling in*, meant as an additional source of understanding of the experience of others, that cannot be reached by other ways of interrogation and contact. I discuss that the term empathy in this approach may not be distinguished enough from other kinds of interpersonal contact, as for the term to remain informative. I raise the objection that simulation, used in the right manner, is well entitled to the term empathy.

The Term Empathy

Einfühlung literally means *feeling in* or *feeling into*. According to Jan Slaby the term empathy was first used in 1909 as a translation of the German *Einfühlung* as used by Theodor Lipps, who had used the term as a translation from the English *sympathy* used by David Hume (cf. Slaby 250). Slaby as an influence on Hume refers to Adam Smith and quotes:

“By imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something, which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them” (Smith in Slaby 250).

Already here in the beginnings of the term Slaby detects a major unclarity, whether sophisticated cognitive processes of imagination and projection or “becoming the other” is meant, an unclarity he doesn’t see solved until today.

Views on Empathy in Historical Phenomenology

Dan Zahavi gives a survey of different views on empathy in the phenomenological tradition.

- The German philosopher and psychologist Theodor Lipps at the beginning of the twentieth century claimed “our knowledge of others [...] as irreducible and original as our perceptual experience of objects” (Lipps in Zahavi 288). He believed us to have an instinctive tendency to reproduce gestures or expressions and their connected feelings, if we see them from others. Afterwards we would project these feelings on others (cf. Zahavi 288).
- Husserl rejected this view as a “refuge of phenomenological ignorance” (Husserl in Zahavi 290), and especially criticised Lipp’s claim that imitation constitutes the basis of empathy (cf. Zahavi 290). Husserl preferred the term *Fremderfahrung*, since *Einfühlung* “[...] remains unclear whether the term is meant to designate the projection of one’s own self into a foreign body, or rather the actual encounter with a foreign embodied self.” (Husserl in Zahavi 290).
- Edith Stein 1917 defined “[...] empathy as a basic irreducible form of intentionality directed at foreign experiences [...]” (Stein in Zahavi 290f). She criticised Lipp’s theory, which in her analysis explains *emotional contagion* rather than empathy. It “[...] might explain why a certain experience occurs in me [...]”, but not “[...] how I come to understand the other.” (Stein in Zahavi 290).
- Karl Jaspers in 1923 described for the clinical context: “Subjective symptoms cannot be perceived by the sense-organs, but have to be grasped by transferring oneself, so to say, into the other individual’s psyche; that is by empathy.” (Jaspers 1968, 1313). Phenomenological understanding of what others are experiencing could be achieved by exploration and direct questioning of others, but also by “empathetic actualization”, “feeling oneself into it”, “immersing oneself in the gestures, behaviour, expressive movements of others” (Jaspers 1968, 1316f). In this way we could distinguish phenomena known to us all, including exaggerations, diminutions and combinations of own experiences from “phenomena that are completely inaccessible to any empathetic understanding” (Jaspers 1968, 1318), as for example primary delusions.
- Scheler in the 1950s in his “perceptual theory of other minds” (Scheler in Zahavi 292) claimed that “we can in principle enjoy as direct an access to the experiential life of others as we can to our own.” (Scheler in Zahavi 293). He noted that we can also precisely understand expressions that we are unable to imitate, by using the example of a dog wagging its tail and expressing happiness (cf. Zahavi 290). Scheler distinguished *emotional contagion*, where the emotion becomes one’s own from *emotional sharing*, where the understood emotion remains that of the other and different from one’s own feelings. Here the emotion of the other is the intentional object of one’s empathy (cf. Zahavi 291).

Empathetic understanding in a phenomenological view can be a similar or corresponding feeling. “In either case, however, our emotional reaction is exactly that – a reaction.” (Zahavi 291). A reduction of empathy to same or similar emotional states “[...] conflates empathy with other kinds of interpersonal understanding and fails to capture the fact that we can and do *experience* others.” (Zahavi 291).

Is there a Gap between the Minds?

So even in the phenomenological tradition there are different views on the accessibility of other’s experiences. How can interpersonal understanding work?

Theory of Mind answers the question, how we have access to others, by saying we perceive their actions but not their intentions. The mental states that cause the behaviour are principally unobservable. Beliefs that guide the action and desires that motivate action have thus to be inferred from other sources. Belief/desire psychology, the so called *common-sense psychology* or *folk psychology*, tries to explain and predict other people’s behaviour by imposing intentional states on them. Folk psychology is believed to be a very complex universal innate or learned theory developed without scientific support.

Matthew Ratcliffe profoundly criticises folk psychology for being not as commonsensical as proposed. He refutes the supposed obviousness, and shows it as a philosophical position that incorporates assumptions that are questionable, and that in many respects does not adequately describe human interaction (cf. Ratcliffe 2007 22).

Interaction theorist like Shaun Gallagher, Thomas Fuchs, Matthew Ratcliffe and Jan Slaby focus on mutual interactive engagement and being-with one another. They believe mental states of others are not hidden but in plain view and can be experienced directly and without difficulties (cf. Slaby 255). “The agency of others is experienced *in* their behaviour rather than inferred from it. [...] affective awareness [...] is [...] inextricable from bodily responsiveness of self to other.” (Ratcliffe 2007, 124).

- Edmund Husserl claimed that any objective view on the world presupposes other subjects. So there has to be a pre-objective access to others before any objectification is possible (cf. Ratcliffe 2007, 124f).
- Max Scheler also believed there to be a “primitive givenness of the ‘other’” (Scheler in Ratcliffe 2007 128) that makes it possible to perceive phenomena as expressions of another perceiving subject. This basic connection he believed to be seldom recognized, which lead to the misconstrue of intersubjectivity “[...] as that of connecting two entities that began life experientially cut off from each other” (Ratcliffe 2007 128). To experience others as animate

involves “some degree of undifferentiated identification” (Scheler in Ratcliffe 2007 128). “One does not fully distinguish oneself from others and experience them as wholly distinct entities, detached from one’s own experiencing.” (Ratcliffe 2007 128).

- Alfred Schutz defends the view that we have experiential access to others, but denies that these experiences are given to us in full self-presence (cf. Zahavi 296). In face-to-face encounter of a concrete *we-relationship* we experience “a shared motivational context where our respective streams of consciousness are interlocked [...]. [...] there is a form of interpersonal understanding that isn’t based on theory, imagination or past experiences.” (Schutz in Zahavi 297). He pointed out that a single model cannot do justice to the many forms of interpersonal understanding. Since we encounter each other in situations in a shared world, in face-to-face situations we should not miss out to have our assumptions about the other’s experiences confirmed or disconfirmed by direct questions (cf. Schutz in Zahavi 302f).
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty claimed that we encounter others in perception. No gap has to be bridged, the meaning of behaviour is perceptually apparent. As our own bodies are not objects of our perception but that through which we experience, others as well are not encountered as “one of my phenomena [...]” but “the body of the other [...] offers me the task of a true communication ...” (Merleau-Ponty in Ratcliffe 2007 128). In the responsiveness of young infants to facial expressions and their ability to imitate it, he finds evidence for a direct mapping between perception and proprioception. He concludes that we must have the means of systematically comparing the body of others as seen by me with my body as sensed by me (cf. Ratcliffe 2007 128). The base of our emergence as individuals is an undifferentiated awareness of agency that leaves us never wholly separated from each other (cf. Ratcliffe 2007 128).

More recent findings in neuroscience are claimed by both simulationists and interaction theorists to support their views. The research on mirror neurons in monkeys in the late 20th century by Fadiga, Fogassi, Gallese, Pellegrino and Rizzolatti indicate that there is an innate link between proprioception and perception. These mirror neurons fire when an action is performed by a monkey and when it is watched being performed by another monkey. Different kinds of mirror neurons are tuned to special kinds and even manners of actions, such as “firmly grasping an object” (Ratcliffe 2007 131). Interestingly they do not react to movements that are not goal oriented but mere changes in physical posture.

Although there are no direct recordings of mirror neurons in humans, there is strong evidence for the existence of a mirror system (cf. Ratcliffe 2007 130), that may even be more elaborate with additional properties. There is evidence that the human mirror system is receptive to communicative gestures without targets and facial expressions of others. (cf. Ratcliffe 2007 131f).

While these findings do not support Theory Theory, Gallese and Goldman believe them to support Simulation Theory on a *low level*, that relies on neural mechanism (cf. Gallagher 354ff). “The mirror system ‘seems to be nature’s way of getting the observer into the same ‘mental shoes’ as the target’” (Gallese and Goldman in Ratcliffe 2007 132).

Gallagher refutes that and finds arguments that mirror neurons do not point to an explicit or implicit two-step process, like perceiving the others and then simulating them. He much more sees evidence that “perception of action is already an understanding of the action; there is no extra step involved [...]” (Gallagher in Ratcliffe 2007 133).

This view is supported by neuroscientists like Gallese and Fogassi, who claim that mirror neurons facilitate perception, rather than modelling” (Ratcliffe 2007 134), and take perception as “the result of sensorimotor coupling” (Fogassi and Gallese in Ratcliffe 2007 134).

If mirror neurons do not differentiate between the agencies of self and other, there must be other processes involved, so we experience the other not as a phenomenon and not as ourselves but as another person. In the phenomenological tradition much of the nature of the supposed primary connectedness remains unclear. In a dialogue with neuroscience Ratcliffe expects mutual illumination and some support from neuroscientific research on Husserlian claims. On the other side the phenomenological findings on the basic sense of others can complement recent work on mirror neurons (cf. Ratcliffe 2007 136).

So it seems to me that while Theory of Mind based approaches focus on the gap in knowledge about the other, interaction theorists bring to the foreground the possibilities of connectedness between people. I agree that there are much more important things in interaction, but the question, if someone else experiences the same when seeing the colour red as I do, still remains unsolvable even with the use of communication. So if that question is an unimportant construct, it nevertheless shows that there is at least some uncertainty about the experiential difference between I and the other, that is not accounted for in Interaction Theory.

Empathy according to Theory of Mind

In Theory of Mind empathy that bridges the supposed gap between individuals is construed in two different ways, by Theory Theory or by Simulation Theory. The term empathy is used for hugely different processes, like

- feeling what someone else feels
- caring about what someone else feels
- being affected by someone’ emotions

- imagining oneself to be in another's situation
- imagining being another
- making inferences about another's mental states
- and combinations between those

Here is a definition with supposedly sufficient conditions for empathy (de Vignemont and Singer in Gallagher 358) :

- one is in an affective state
- this state is isomorphic to another person's state
- this state is elicited by the observation or imagination of another person's affective state
- one knows that the other person is the source of one's own affective state
- later de Vignemont and Jacob add a fifth point: "B must care about A." (Ratcliffe 2016, 3)

While others like Stephanie Preston and Frans de Waal plead for a unified and broad use of the term, Amy Coplan suggests a use restricted to *high-level simulation* as "complex (that is cognitive and affective) imaginative processes in which an observer simulates another person's psychic state while maintaining self-other differentiation." (Coplan in Slaby 251). The interaction theorist Jan Slaby, though detecting major difficulties in all these components, states that "[...] there are good reasons for reserving the term empathy for exactly this kind of complex, demanding process." (Slaby 251).

Alvin Goldman on a neuroscientific level describes two routes to empathy, the reconstructive and the mirroring, and reduces it to "empathic states, that is, states that exemplify substantial isomorphism to those of their targets." (Goldman 42). He believes simulation to be a standard strategy for our everyday social cognition and a key to mindreading. He distinguishes low-level from high-level empathy by subtracting the terms *emotive* and *caring* (cf. Gallagher 357).

In Theory Theory, represented by Jerry Fodor, Patricia Churchland, Daniel Dennett and others, it is argued that we develop a body of knowledge without scientific support, a theory about our own intentional states and how they influence our actions and then apply it on others, which we consider to be similar individuals as ourselves. "The majority of investigators in the field have argued that the child's early understanding of the mind can be usefully construed as a theory and that changes in that understanding can be thought of as theory changes." (Gopnik 505).

Simulation theorists like Jane Heal, Alvin Goldman, Robert Gordon and others believe to have found a more economic way, by using the assumption that others are sufficiently similar to us, and so we can use ourselves as models to explain and predict others by knowingly or tacitly putting us in their place by adopting their perspective.

So empathy in Theory of Mind based approaches is an imaginative process that in one or the other way tries to reproduce states of mind of the other in oneself. It distinguishes empathy from other feelings towards or in response to others, and does not focus these.

From a phenomenological perspective it is criticised that Theory of Mind based descriptions of empathy do not take in account the two person relation, but rather use a constructed third person perspective. This approach leads to impersonal and technical descriptions that lack any reciprocal communication. Also the focus on states of minds is misleading, since this static term misses the process quality of empathic encounters.

Empathy in Interaction Approaches

Coming from a phenomenological tradition of incomplete separation of individuals, a number of Interaction Theorists in the last decades have turned to criticising Theory of Mind based approaches to empathy and developed a view, where communication, interaction and common agency are taken as the base of encountering others in their full horizon in the best possible way.

- Shaun Gallagher opposes *low-level* and *high-level simulation*, since both approaches do not distinguish empathy from our ordinary everyday processes of social cognition (cf. Gallagher 358). Analysing the caring condition of empathy as intentional difference of feeling, he distinguishes *feeling for the other* from *feeling with the other* and raises the question whether non-isomorphic *feelings with* the other may as well be empathetic. He points out the intersubjective quality of empathy (cf. Gallagher 360f) and notices that we can also empathize with others who are not like us, if we know their stories. For Gallagher *narrative* seems necessary for empathy, since it provides understanding of diverse contexts broader than our own (cf. Gallagher 370). This opens us towards the other in a way that contrasts simulation, which in his view reduces the other to *something close to who I am* (cf. Gallagher 372).
- Peter Goldie turned against a particular kind of empathy, namely empathetic perspective shifting in the meaning of “consciously and intentionally shifting your perspective in order to imagine *being* the other person, and thereby sharing in *his of her* thoughts, feelings, decisions, and other aspects of their psychology.” (Goldie 302). He points out that his critique is not contingent, merely due to limits of our power of imagination, but a conceptual one. “Essentially, empathetic perspective shifting is conceptually unable to operate with the appropriately full-blooded-notion of first-person agency.” (Goldie 303). This inadequacy exists below the surface also in so called “base cases” (Goldie 303), where there are no relevant differences in psychological dispositions between A and B, there are no relevant non-rational influences and confusions in B, and B is not in a psychological conflict between possible alternatives (cf. Goldie 307). In these cases what is emulated is a minimal

rational stance towards a subject. A practical stance involving a full-blooded notion of agency with dispositions of character, personality, and other psychological dispositions, a conception of a past and future that play a role in decisions to be made and lived with, can only be taken by the person him- or herself (cf. Goldie 317). In contrast he accepts “in-his-shoes perspective shifting”, where one simply imagines being in the other’s position (cf. Goldie 302).

- Jan Slaby believes that both kinds of perspective shifting fail at reaching the other’s experiential reality, but also are not necessary for civilized interpersonal conduct. It is simply not possible to fully imagine being others or even imagining being in other’s shoes in their full-blooded-agency (cf. Slaby 252). “Background dispositions, traits and abilities of B, as far as these are known, have to be objectified and introduced consciously and deliberately [...]” (Slaby 252). Background feelings could only be introduced as foreground feelings, and so *existential feelings* like for example background anxiety (cf. Ratcliffe in Slaby 253) and their impact on experience cannot be emulated. “In empathetic perspective shifting, where A. thinks B’s thoughts, [...] A usurps B’s agency, replacing it with her own.” (Goldie in Slaby 254). Since in his view empathy understood as simulation completely fails, he turns to interaction and recognition as possible forms of connected co-presence in mutual interactive engagement (cf. Slaby 255). “The only way to meaningfully engage with another person’s mentality without imposition is by engaging with her on the level of action, [...] by jointly striving towards a goal or by jointly enacting a project. [...] This common agency brings forth the ‘union of mind that advocates of empathy strive for [...] and lets an experiential ‘we space’ open up” (Slaby 255). Slaby devalues empathy as *quasi-inquisitive attempt to fully ‘get at’ another person*, and believes it to be not only impossible but also superfluous. “Nothing is lost when one replaces this by a stance of *acknowledging*, of *recognizing* the other, both in her (partial) agentive autonomy and in her exposedness as a vulnerable, needy being.” (cf. Judith Butler in Slaby 256). Access to another’s mind is given perceptually, in a non-detached way. In situations of ongoing interaction in practical contexts, where it is mostly clear and visible what the other is thinking, intending, or feeling, no miraculous *bridge* is needed (cf. Slaby 255f).

As Slaby himself notes, this view of common agency has moved far from specialist debates about high-level empathy (cf. Slaby 256), but as it seems to me, also from other debates about different kinds of empathy, as it turns to mutual engagement, where understanding the other does not seem to be the focus.

- Matthew Ratcliffe argues that openness to interpersonal differences is itself sufficient to qualify as empathy, understood as the exploratory process of a dialogical experience with a distinctive kind of second-person attitude. Simulation can make contributions to empathy, but is not necessary. The term empathy is already often referring to something distinct from simulation, and if a decision is to be made, he believes his approach to be a better candidate

for this title (cf. Ratcliffe 2016, 1f). He points out that simulation, carried out as projection of one's own experience upon the other and not as a source of additional ideas for a common exploration, even indicates a lack of empathy (Ratcliffe 2016, 14). The other may feel, she has not been understood at all.

Ratcliffe draws from descriptions of clinical practitioners, who emphasize the communication in the empathetic process. It is described as a mutual process of "[...] confronting, assimilating and accommodating to one another" (Margulies in Ratcliffe 2016, 6). That the understanding experience of the clinician may differ in various ways from the patient's own is not seen as interruption of empathy. Appreciating the differences is more so a necessary manner to develop the needed distinctive kind of openness towards the other (cf. Ratcliffe 2016, 6). Empathy is described as a style of conduct in which the clinician's attention is directed at the patient and not unduly to introspection, and involves encountering the other in the context of their lives, with their hopes, projects, commitments, concerns, and other background influences (cf. Halpern in Ratcliffe 2016, 7). Ratcliffe develops a conception of empathy that involves the following points (Ratcliffe 2016, 7f):

1. Appreciation of difference is more central to empathy than the achievement of similarity.
2. Empathy is a matter of engaging in, or being open to the possibility of engaging in, an exploratory process.
3. Empathy involves a distinctive kind of attitude towards the other person.
4. Sophisticated empathetic understandings are usually collaborative endeavours.
5. We do not empathise with isolated experiences, but situate them within a wider context.
6. Empathetic appreciation of someone's experience can be shaped by an understanding of it that differs substantially from a first-person understanding.

To develop the distinctive openness needed, ordinarily presupposed commonalities concerning social and cultural norms, emotional states, cognitive and practical abilities have to be suspended (cf. Ratcliffe 2016, 9). To *radically empathize* (cf. Ratcliffe 2012) with people in experiential situations that differ very much from our own experiences, like for example patients with psychotic episodes, it may even be necessary to "[...] stop presupposing what is more usually given as *our* [commonly shared] *world*". (Ratcliffe 2012, 478).

Essential to empathy Ratcliffe defines a second person relation, in which we are engaged with *who the others are*, with their experiences and their lives (cf. Ratcliffe 2016, 18). He distinguishes *world-oriented relating*, in which people engage in a common experience in a shared environment, which according to Ratcliffe does not involve empathy. In *person-*

oriented relating people commonly “[...] explore one or both parties’ experience, rather than their shared situation.” (Ratcliffe 2016, 19). He names the following two points as necessary and sufficient conditions for empathetic person-oriented second-person relation (Ratcliffe 2016, 19):

- a kind of attentiveness to the other person, involving openness to certain kinds of interpersonal difference
- an interpersonal cooperative process, which incorporates that attentiveness and involves progressive exploration of experience

Ratcliffe concludes: “If empathy is to be regarded as a singular cognitive achievement, it is more plausible a matter of this than of simulation. And if the term ‘empathy’ is taken instead to encompass a number of different achievements, openness-exploration is a more plausible candidate than explicit simulation for the primary means by which we seek to understand – and indeed to experience – the experiences of others.” (Ratcliffe 2016, 24).“

Feeling with against feeling in?

Following the big change in the view of empathy, from trying to reproduce a similar experience to another’s within oneself to common agency or any mutual exploratory process, where one’s attention is focused on the other’s experience, empathy seems to change from *feeling in* to *feeling with*.

I agree that simulation is not a way of *becoming the other* nor reproducing his experiential reality in a full way. Still for me, simulation as an attempt, doesn’t seem so far from the phenomenological approach to bracket one’s own presumptions to better imagine the situation of others and try to get a closer feeling of their experience. There does not seem to be so much difference between “One enters -to varying degrees – someone else’s perspective to the extent that one ceases to impose one’s own experience upon her; one does not somehow become her.” (Ratcliffe 2016, 22) and taking the other’s stance, putting myself in his position. So, while simulation fails and does not have to really cross a bridge between to separated entities, it is still a try to better understand the other’s felt situation, by using oneself not so much as a model, but as sufficiently similar affectable and responding animated body.

If, as Ratcliffe claims, the approach of openness-exploration is a better candidate for the term empathy than simulation, how does he distinguish it from other forms of interested attentional encounters with others?

If for example, I help a friend after a bicycle accident, I may be very interested and focused to understand even the affective quality of his experience, as I try to find out what to do and how to

help him. At the same time I will try not to resonate with his feelings, nor let my own feelings of shock and fear come to the foreground. So the *kind of attentiveness* that Ratcliffe names as the first necessary condition has to be further clarified. The openness towards personal differences would have to include the intention and the ability to let oneself be affected by the other's feelings.

The second condition of cooperative exploration, rules out the possibility to empathise with someone, who does not want to be empathised with. Of course this does not have the advantages of dialogical clarification in a common exploratory process. Still I claim, that it is possible. Think of a teenager who wants to drop out of school and believes any help from an adult to be a manipulative attempt to break his will. Or think of an alcoholic, who tries to keep up the façade and hide the obvious signs of his disease. There is a significant difference of attitude between encountering a person as a however benevolent person opposite and trying to imagine, feel and understand his situation from his perspective, whether he is interested in it or not. So it seems to me, a caring version of explicit simulation can fulfil criteria of empathy like person-oriented second-person relation without entering a cooperative process, of course without claiming to catch the other's full experiential reality by full isomorphism of emotional states. Giving up the idea of *the interpersonal similarity condition* (Jacobs in Gallagher 359) as a whole, just because it can never be fully reached and proved, and replacing it with any other directed first-person feeling, seems to stretch the term empathy very far. Ratcliffe rightly concedes, the accusation of confusing empathy with broader ways of unempathetic interpersonal encounters, can be made to simulationists but also to interaction theorists, as himself (Ratcliffe 2016, 21). Is *feeling with* really sufficient to getting the best possible grasp of the other's experience?

Presupposed we are focussing on encounters where A is open and focused on the experiential world of B, we can still enter the situation in different roles and with different attitudes. As such opposing, supporting or sympathetic person we have a different experience than as *empathetic person*, meant as one who tries to get a grasp of *how it feels to be* not only in the other's shoes but *in his animated body* by getting into a similar feeling. If we come to conclude, that the term empathy should be used for all these above categories, we need another term for simulation in a caring and person-oriented way, as an approximative try that does not claim to be the same as the other person's experiential reality. In my opinion this approach still has a good right to claim the term *empathy* in the original meaning of *feeling in*.

Conclusion and critique

All phenomenologically based Interaction Theorists cited in this paper are united in their opposition of Theory of Mind based ideas on empathy, them being Theory Theory or Simulation Theory approaches. They convincingly point out that access to other's experiences is already given in a pre-theoretical way and construes of other's experiential world by way of theorising or simulating are not a bridge between two entities, but more so ways of avoiding practical contact to the other and turning to one's own experiences instead. Instead they propose to use the possibilities of the given

connection between individuals to encounter others with the focus on their experiential reality, in awareness of similarities and differences of one's own.

Shaun Gallagher shows how simulation does not suffice for understanding the other. Peter Goldie sets out that it does not achieve what it strives for at all. Jan Slaby wants to restrict the term empathy to complex cognitive processes of active explicit simulation, and believes it not needed for meaningful interaction. He prefers to replace it by *acknowledgement* and *recognition* of the other. Matthew Ratcliffe shows that the term empathy is already often used for other things than simulation, and that openness without simulation can be sufficient for empathy while simulation without openness is not (Ratcliffe 2016, 2). He claims that openness-exploration is more worthy of the term empathy than simulation (cf. Ratcliffe 2016, 24).

All of them turn away from the *interpersonal similarity condition* and open their approach towards feelings that are different from the other's feeling, but are directed at the other in a caring way. If they use the term empathy for their approach, this widens the realm of addressed attitudes in a way, that risks to make it less informative. Although Matthew Ratcliffe explicitly concedes that simulation often contributes to empathetic processes, if used in the right manner, later it is only mentioned in the context of *lack of empathy*, when projected upon other persons. This to me seems an uncharitable treatment of an ability that we have, and can be well used to increase our understanding for others.

While I am deeply respectful and thankful for the substantial work that is done in phenomenological research and for important insights concerning the underlying structure of interpersonal relations and the basic connectedness of individuals, there still remains an unsolved mystery of *knowing* how the other really experiences. By changing the focus to the basic connectedness of individuals, Interaction Theorists seem to avoid that question, maybe just because they turned to something more useful. Still I would expect that issue to be addressed. Because even if "There is nothing hidden behind these faces and gestures, no domain to which I have no access, merely a little shadow which owes its very existence to the light." (Merleau-Ponty xii), there still is a shadow.

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