A CONCEPTUAL LOOK AT EMPATHY: IMPLICATIONS FOR MORAL EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on current educational, psychological and philosophical literature, this thesis addresses the diversity of the meaning of the term empathy as used in the literature and the consequences that emphasizing some meanings over others may have for moral education. Making sense of the conceptual confusion is of utmost importance to educators in terms of what they can legitimately pursue in attempting to cultivate and increase empathic understanding in students. The meanings of the term serve as a basis for an analysis of the concept and the development of a new conception of empathy—one specifically developed for moral education. If the concept of empathy is to go beyond our ordinary language use to be of significant use in an education aimed at promoting respect for others, it must be specified that having empathic receptions involves taking the humanity of another seriously. Empathy, as this notion is developed and justified throughout the thesis, involves seeing others as fully human and having a genuine concern for the welfare of others. This conception which includes these compassionate dispositions is further developed and justified to provide a basis for future empirical research on the acquisition of empathy among children and for the production of appropriate ways to develop empathic understanding in students.
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INTRODUCTION—The Significance of a Clearer Conception of Empathy for Moral Education

Empathy, properly conceived, can be an extremely powerful concept for education which seeks to cultivate in students appreciation of and respect for the life stances of others. Empathy can help us to dispel our preconceptions and prejudices about the world and those around us so that we may appreciate what other people think and feel by feeling it ourselves. The empathic individual is one who is sensitively open to other peoples' characteristics, their ways of understanding things and their feelings in particular circumstances. This is because empathy involves understanding how others see their situation and why they see it that way. Understanding how other people feel contributes to the development of respect and appreciation for persons each with their own unique blend of needs and desires, emotional constitution, interpretation of events, and concerns. Through empathy, we tap into our own emotional experiences which help connect us to the feeling experiences of another—our own interest and partiality is temporarily suspended. In this way, we form a kind of relationship with others where we participate in their experience as they have. Consequently, we gain a renewed perspective on other’s circumstances and ultimately an appreciation of what they feel in a situation.

In this way, empathy has tremendous potential for helping students to better understand and appreciate another’s perspective while increasing their sensitivity to the morally hazardous situation of others. Emotional engagement, through empathy, constitutes a very crucial part of moral relations between one person and another. Further, participating in other peoples’ emotional experiences through empathy heightens our awareness of their needs, desires, interests, wants and the like and helps us to appreciate their circumstances from their own
perspective.

Yet there is lack of clarity in both theory and educational practice as to the nature of empathy and how it may be used pedagogically. Often empathy is thought to be synonymous with either identification, projection, or sympathy. This common confusion can have serious consequences for understanding and respecting another’s circumstance. Primarily, in identification, projection and sympathy, we transfer to another emotions that we would feel, given our own values, beliefs, life circumstances and so on if we were in a similar situation. This, however, does not necessarily involve an understanding of how another feels in a situation. With identification, projection and even, to some extent, sympathy, we remain embedded in our own point of view—attributing to the other our own knowledge, viewpoint, feelings and so forth. Consequently, in such cases, moral deliberation may be clouded by our egocentricity and inability to see beyond our own limited circumstances. Often this is the cause of well-intended solutions that ultimately have nothing to do with the needs, wants and desires of the disadvantaged. Empathy, when misconstrued in this way, is actually antithetical to developing respect and appreciation for the needs and concerns of others, and is therefore inappropriate for a moral education seeking to cultivate those attributes in students.

Role-taking and role play are also often thought synonymous to empathy and are perhaps the most popular pedagogical tools used in understanding another’s perspective. Many theorists assume that the ability to predict the behaviour or attitudes of others is the same as empathizing with them. The ability to predict others attitudes and opinions can lead to assessing groups of people which typically leads to stereotyping.

On a more technical note, role-taking is often categorized as a skill. This can lead
educators to conclude that a pedagogy of practice is the appropriate way to develop empathic response. In other words, role-playing is the way to practice being empathic. Yet empathy is logically related to noticing certain features or being aware of certain types of things in others; therefore, talk of skill may be altogether out of place pedagogically.

From that perspective, it is necessary to develop a clearer understanding of the concept of empathy before we can put it to appropriate educational use. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the concept of empathy using empirical, educational and philosophical literature as a basis for the analysis and to develop a workable conception of empathy, specifically for moral education. This conception is developed and justified to provide a basis for future empirical research on the acquisition of empathy among children, and for the production of appropriate ways for cultivating and increasing empathic understanding in students as well as to foster empathic persons. Specifically, I argue that empathy must be understood as a reception concept. Further, if the concept of empathy is to be properly conceived for an education aimed at promoting appreciation of and respect for the circumstances of others, the conception must relate empathy to a set of dispositions which involve seeing others as fully human and having a genuine concern for the welfare of others. I also examine the conditions that allow empathy to occur. Finally, I mention the implications that my conception of empathy has for moral education.
CHAPTER ONE—Different Conceptions of Empathy in Education

Making sense of the widespread conceptual confusion among theorists who attempt to define and test empathy is of utmost importance if we are to identify effective and legitimate means for producing or cultivating empathy in students. It is essential that our pedagogy reflect an adequate understanding of the meaning of the concept.

This chapter critically examines various conceptions of empathy in education and attempts to explain why they are inadequate for developing programs in moral education. Based on four articles chosen from recent philosophical and educational research journals, I have categorized the concept of empathy as described in the articles into five non-mutually exclusive kinds: (i) Empathy as Projection, (ii) Empathy as Feeling, (iii) Empathy vs. Sympathy, (iv) Empathy as Understanding, (v) Empathy as Imaginative Identification. In what follows, I will review each article and discuss the quality of each analysis. These discussions will serve as a basis for further analysis and the development of a workable conception of empathy in education.

1.1 Empathy as Projection

Shapiro's article entitled "The Pedagogy of Learning and Unlearning Empathy"\(^1\) poses three main questions regarding the nature of empathy: (i) what is empathy, (ii) why are we empathic to some beings and not to others, (iii) how do we learn empathy (or, do we have to learn it?). In attempting to answer these central questions, Shapiro strives to convince the reader of the necessity and importance of empathy for the ethical treatment of animals.

Shapiro defines empathy as "a way of understanding another being, particularly

understanding his/her feelings, motives and interests as they are experienced by that being." He distinguishes empathic understanding from objective understanding which he describes as staying "outside of those experiences and outside of one's own experience as well." For Shapiro, empathy requires trust and intimacy for we must leave ourselves "partly behind" and go into the other person's experience.

Shapiro postulates a tripartite developmental stage theory in answer to how one learns empathy. These stages are loosely represented and seem to be hierarchical. As Shapiro sees it, almost from the beginning of life individuals are "out there with others" in one "common world." Therefore, he argues, it would be wrong to assume that individuals start somehow inside their own world and slowly learn to find their way "out" into somebody else's. For Shapiro, human beings "catch the emotional atmosphere" of other human beings from the beginning of life by a kind of "emotional contagion." Shapiro does not seem to want to say that this level is learned; rather, at this level, emotional contagion is a kind of "automatic participation" with others, such as an infant crying when another infant cries.

As the child develops a clearer sense of oneself as distinguished from others, the child is able to operate at a more sophisticated level. Shapiro calls this level "active bodily imitation." The child is more "active" in selecting who she participates with, but this participation, Shapiro tells us, is still on the level of "feelings" and "bodily posture." The child now actively imitates the behaviour of other children, animals and even inanimate objects.

But these two stages, emotional contagion and active bodily imitation, act only as the

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2 Shapiro 43.

3 Shapiro 43.
early basis for empathy. *Genuine* empathy, Shapiro states, is not possible until a child is able to adopt another perspective or understand the world from another point of view. It is at this stage that Shapiro feels children, in a sense, *unlearn* empathy.

In an earlier stage, the child imputes feelings and motives to almost anything that moves. The sun itself is alive and moves across the highway of the sky to bed down at the end of its long journey. As we have just described, the child learns and, to an extent, unlearns empathy. He or she also learns those classes of objects with which it is socially acceptable to empathize. There is the sun on one hand and cousin Bill on the other.4

Among the lessons society teaches the child is which of these beings are fitting and possible objects of her empathic understanding.

Shapiro argues that one unfortunate consequence of society’s teaching is that the child is taught that animals are not the "subjects of a life." According to Shapiro, we are taught a confusing set of lessons regarding what animals are and how we are to relate to them as human beings. He feels that society builds a "screen between us and them." As a result, we are taught that we need not, because we *cannot*, empathize with certain animals. This perspective, in Shapiro’s mind, "deindividuates the animal and degrades animal life in general."5

While I strongly disagree with Shapiro’s argument that we can and therefore should empathize with animals, his discussion brings up some salient points about empathy in general. Before I discuss Shapiro’s more salient points, it is necessary to make clear the deficiencies in his argument.

4 Shapiro 44.

5 Shapiro 46.
Unlike Shapiro, I argue that understanding another's experience, or being able to adopt that person's point of view, is possible only for someone who has experienced something similar to the experience of that individual. The more different from oneself the other experiencer is, the less success one can expect with the enterprise. And it is our own experiences that provide the basic material for our imagination. In imagining what it is like to be in the position of another, we are restricted to the resources of our own mind (where 'mind' includes the body), and those resources, I feel, are inadequate for the task of empathizing with many animals. It is beyond our ability as human beings to conceive of the specific subjective character of a being that does not share in our form of life. Human beings fundamentally share a form of life and because of that sharing understanding other human beings is possible. While it may be true that animals are "subjects of a life," as Shapiro wishes to argue, those experiences are foreign to beings of a different type, namely humans.⁶

Seen in this light, while Shapiro initially defines empathy as "a way of understanding," he seems to be confusing understanding with projection. This is a common confusion but has serious consequences for empathic understanding. Projection occurs when one imagines oneself in the place of another and projects one's own beliefs, values and lifestyle into the situation of

⁶ My argument has as its foundation the position that Thomas Nagel takes in his article "What is it Like to be a Bat?" In that article, Nagel uses an extreme example to argue, correctly I believe, that one is unable to know what it is like to have the experience of organisms which are dissimilar to oneself. Central to his argument is that bats are fundamentally, to humans, an alien form of life. He argues that a bat's perception of the world is extremely foreign to human subjective experience. Nagel tells us that a bat perceives the world through sonar. And though clearly a form of perception, bat sonar is not similar in any sense to the way in which humans subjectively perceive the world. As Nagel puts it, we cannot extrapolate the inner life of the bat from our own case. See Thomas Nagel, "What is it Like to be a Bat?," Mortal Questions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 165-180.
another. In the case of animals, we see examples of this in children’s books (Peter the Rabbit and the like) and Walt Disney films (101 Dalmations, Lady and the Tramp, and so forth). I argue that all we can do in the case of animals is project our own feelings because we simply have no way of knowing what an animals’ perspective is like. Likewise, to project one’s own imagined response into another person’s situation does not promote a better understanding of the other person. For instead of imagining what a situation would be like for another person, one imagines what it would be like for oneself in that situation. Projection, then, is actually antithetical to empathy.

Yet, while I disagree with Shapiro’s basic position, his argument does point out one very important point about the nature of empathy (as relevant to human beings) which merits further consideration. Shapiro argues that society builds a screen between human beings and animals which consequently degrades animal life. He asserts that we are taught confusing lessons about what animals are and how we are to relate to them. This is a very subtle yet crucial factor that should be explored when considering empathic understanding between different groups of

7 I thank Yeuk Yi Pang, Ph.D. candidate @ University of British Columbia, for this very illuminating and appropriate example.

8 While I argue that animals are fundamentally unlike humans using Nagel on bats as justification, I must acknowledge that there are groups of animals that are more closely related to a human form of life. Animals who play a central role in our lives (such as pets) may very well fall into that category. Many pet owners are adamant about being able to relate to, for example, their dog’s wounded paw or their cat giving birth, etc. However, even though the pet owner is, in a sense, relating to the pet’s suffering, I do not think that this kind of relating is empathic. Rather, in both cases, our knowledge is restricted to what our own feelings, as humans, are in conjunction to those experiences. When we talk of empathy, we are not limiting the experience to a physically painful sensation (as in wounded paw/childbirth). Yes, I know that my dog is hurt and I may feel sorry for it because of that, but I cannot empathize with its feelings/emotions because those things remain foreign to me, regardless of how that pet may share in my life.
people. Narrow "us" and "them" mentality is detrimental to the consideration of others' points of view. Intolerance of other's points of view polarizes people. For that reason, a narrow conception of persons decreases the likelihood of empathic understanding.

1.2 Empathy as Feeling/Emotion

Sutherland’s main concern in her article "Education and Empathy" is whether education can actually produce or develop empathy. Early in her article, she refers to empathy as "an emotion which should be educated if such education is possible." Since she treats empathy as a kind of emotion, her article emphasizes what she feels are some outstanding problems of educating emotions, generally, and then goes on to discuss more specifically the particular qualities of empathy which may cause consequent problems for education.

Sutherland adopts the James-Lange theory of emotions. She suggests that "emotions are simply our awareness of physiological changes or reactions taking place within us, conventional labels being attached to this awareness, according to the situation." This being the case, Sutherland argues that the education of emotions should give attention to "learners' physical movements and circumstances and to the cultivation of conscious awareness of physical

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9 Margaret B. Sutherland, "Education and Empathy," British Journal of Educational Studies 34.2 (June 1986): 142-151.

10 Sutherland 142.

11 The James-Lange thesis was proven to be incorrect on physiological grounds, primarily by W.B. Cannon. He argued conclusively that the same visceral and neurological changes accompanied very different emotional states. Further, artificially inducing these changes did not reproduce the appropriate emotions. For an extensive and detailed description of this argument see Robert C. Solomon, "Physiology, Feelings and Behaviour," The Passions (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1976) 151-171.

12 Sutherland 143.
cues given by others in their posture and movement."\textsuperscript{13}

While classifying empathy as a kind of emotion, Sutherland struggles with the confusion common to uses of the term *empathy* in particular and questions if one can be sure that it is possible to educate for empathy at all. Like many others challenged by the term, Sutherland grapples with some meanings commonly attributed to it and concludes that the difference between "knowing what others are feeling" and "feeling what others are feeling" is the important distinction to consider. She argues that "knowing what others are feeling" is a *weak* sense of the use of the term and questions if this kind of "cognitive awareness" could count as *true* empathy. Sutherland also considers whether empathy in the *weak* sense could lead to appropriate action or to influencing the individual's own emotional state as empathy in the *strong* sense--feeling what others are feeling--could. She is concerned about the amount of cognitive assessment of the situation that is required if empathy is to be "appropriate" and not simply a "projection of one's own reactions to another's situation."\textsuperscript{14} Sutherland fears that the intrusion of "cognitive data" may reduce or even destroy the emotional involvement in the situation.

Central to Sutherland's argument is the "intellect versus feeling" theory where feelings count as mere physical sensations devoid of any cognitive content. Her theory is grounded in a very simplistic adaptation of James' definition of emotion. We see the intellect/feeling dichotomy very clearly in her characterization of *strong* and *weak* empathy. She argues for *strong* empathy which she loosely defines as "feeling how others feel." This definition is far too vague and terribly misleading to be of much use in the remainder of her argument. It is

\textsuperscript{13} Sutherland 144.

\textsuperscript{14} Sutherland 150.
difficult to know what she means by "feeling how others feel." This expression cannot refer to feeling the sensations of that person. While one person's anger may produce shortness of breath, raised blood pressure, and the like, it is not the case that the one empathizing need feel those sensations at all. Yet those sensations are mistakenly assumed to be central because they are taken as what distinguishes one emotion from another. Sutherland's argument needs further explication of the distinction between sensations, feelings and emotions in order for the reader to get a real sense of how she means to use that expression.

Further confusion arises when Sutherland ultimately defines empathy as "a comprehension of what others are feeling, even though we may be cognitively unable to define or state the origins of those feelings."\(^{15}\) I am assuming that this is the definition she wishes to use when referring to "true empathy" earlier in the article although she never gives the reader a clear sense of what "true empathy" actually is. According to her definition, then, Sutherland treats empathy as somehow understanding what another is feeling in some mysterious way which falls outside of the usual methods of cognition. This view is, again, extremely confusing especially since Sutherland concludes that "education which at least encourages the habit of trying to enter into the feelings of others may be a positive gain."\(^{16}\) On Sutherland's account, it is not clear that empathy constitutes any kind of ability or disposition that can actually be developed.

Yet, Sutherland's article does bring out one very serious point for any conceptual study of the term empathy. That is, while one may comprehend what another is experiencing, there must be something more. One may properly assess that another is having an experience of a

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\(^{15}\) Sutherland 146.

\(^{16}\) Sutherland 151.
certain type and may know what it is like to have such an experience without actually empathizing in the least. Sutherland’s point (weak as it may be) about empathy being an "emotional" experience must not be overlooked. If empathy is a "feelingful" experience, a good conceptual analysis of the term must include an adequate account of what that feeling is.

1.3 Empathy vs. Sympathy

Gribble and Oliver raise a different kind of question—i.e. to what extent can moral educators expect to develop or harm children’s impartiality toward others by developing students’ ability to empathize with people. They assert that the moral educator’s concern to develop children’s impartiality towards others has led to the widespread view that developing children’s ability to empathize with people different from themselves can play an important role in moral education, especially through subjects such as literature, history and social studies. Their article analyzes the concept of empathy in order to see to what extent such expectations are justifiable.

In analyzing the concept of empathy, they argue for two conditions—knowledge and affective—as necessary and jointly sufficient. Those conditions are as follows:

Knowledge Condition
1) Person A knows how B feels.
2) A "sees" or "understands" the reason for B feeling as B does.

Affective Condition
3. A "feels" in the same manner as B over the situation "B responding to X."

In addition to statements from the persons concerned, they feel there are two kinds of

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data which someone can call upon to support one's claim that one knows how another feels: evidence of the other person's behaviour; evidence of occasions in the past when oneself looked and acted in a similar manner.\(^{18}\)

They argue that knowing how another person feels is not sufficient knowledge for having empathy. It is necessary, also, for the observer to see in the situation *reason* sufficient for the person to feel as she does. They argue that the more limited the personal experience of such situations of the observer, the less able the observer is to appreciate the implications of the differences between the observer's experience and the experience of others--thus, the more restricted the possibilities of empathy.

Yet the observer, they hold, must also "feel what the other feels"--affective condition. And this feeling must be of a similar kind to the feeling observed. "Feeling the same," they assert, does not require that the one empathizing must display anger or feel one's heart racing, and so on. In fact, they argue that someone who responds directly to the stimulus (heart racing, etc.) instead of to the person who reacts to the stimulus is not empathizing.

Gribble and Oliver argue that empathy implies "feeling with" an agent. They also claim that caring how another feels is implicit in one's own affective response but argue that you could, in fact, care for another without feeling how the other feels. They point out that this happens in *sympathy*. They agree that some degree of feeling is necessary for morality, but opt for "feeling for" (sympathy) over "feeling with" (empathy) as the "minimal affective element" necessary for achieving some level of impartiality.

The most confusing aspect of their discussion is that while they argue that the more

\(^{18}\) Gribble and Oliver 8-9.
understanding we have of the way others think and feel, the more we will be in the position to treat them impartially, they conclude that such understanding is possible without empathy. I disagree. Because sympathy has such strong connection to the negative experiences and emotions of another, it can have undesirable consequences for moral thinking and action. One can surely sympathize with another without really understanding at all what another feels or how another sees a situation. In sympathizing with the sadness of, say, an orphaned child or an oppressed minority, one may end up dwelling on the occasions of grief of the other rather than attempting to become more informed about the situation of another. Consequently, one can feel sorry for another's suffering but this will not necessarily help one to understand that suffering or decide what may alleviate it.

Their argument does, however, help one to better understand the crucial role that analogous experience plays in knowing and understanding other people. To know what another is feeling in regard to a particular situation it is necessary for one to know through experience what it is to stand in appropriate relation to that situation. The point to be made here, however, is the difference between same situations and analogous situations and how they apply to knowing what another is feeling. That is, one must allow room for analogous experiences. While one may not have had an experience that was "the same as" the one with whom one empathizes, an analogous experience may serve the purpose. This point opens up discussion


20 For example, my son may feel angry after losing his football game. Although I, myself, have never played football or had the experience of losing a game, I can recall situations in my life where I have devoted much time and energy to a cause where some form of competition was involved and "losing" made me angry. To use Gribble and Oliver's expression, I am able to
for talking about "degrees of empathy."

And Gribble and Oliver do introduce a separable aspect of empathy that is often not discussed--that is, the notion of caring for others. They treat "caring" as implicit in the affective condition but do not give a clear sense of what this may mean. The caring aspect is a crucial one which must be further explored as, I suggest, perhaps the "moral component" of empathy.

1.4 Empathy as Understanding

Delores Gallo advances the thesis that reasoning, specifically moral reasoning, benefits from empathic understanding. The purpose of her article is to question the relationship that exists between thought and feeling to show that empathy fosters, not diminishes, critical and creative thought. Drawing on both philosophy and psychology, she attempts to make the requisite connections between reason, imagination and empathy to propose that empathy increases one's engagement with an issue and one's motivation for producing a fair judgment.

Gallo holds that many social psychologists have done a disservice to the term empathy in that most of these theorists treat empathy as either a cognitive response (understanding how another feels) or an "affective communion" with another. This "affective communion," she tells us, may refer to putting oneself in the place of another, anticipating the behaviour of another, or imaginatively transposing oneself into the thinking, feeling and actions of another. Gallo disagrees with the cognitive vs. affective split in that she sees the empathic response as one

find my son's "reason for his anger" understandable and this allows me to easily participate in his situation with a minimal amount of "stretch" of my imagination. I argue that the further one must "stretch," the harder it becomes to empathize.

which contains both the cognitive and affective dimension. Gallo, therefore, describes empathy as "the ability to perceive and comprehend the thoughts, feelings and motives of the other to the degree that one can make inferences and predictions consonant with those of the other, while remaining oneself."

Gallo’s discussion of the relationship between empathy and imaginative production is one that I find most intriguing. In this section, she discusses certain characteristics or attributes of the "creative" individual. She describes the creative person as one who possesses

...unusual perceptual and personal openness, and a marked capacity for empathic identification with the other. In the extreme, this produces a condition in which the individual’s self-perception is that of the egoless vehicle, the instrument of the creative product. Flexible ego-control and low defensiveness indicate a desire and a capacity in the creative person to react beyond the boundaries of self...

The important thing to consider is that Gallo recognizes these traits as identical to those characteristic of an empathic disposition. Gallo further describes the creative individual as one who is "characterized by child-like receptivity, a sense of wonder, and a capacity for non-judgmental spontaneous response."

This is one of the first articles I have read that discusses empathy as a disposition rather than skill or response. And while I may not necessarily agree with Gallo’s interpretation of the characteristics of the "creative" individual, I find the traits she describes very helpful in

22 Gallo tells the reader that her description is based on an adaptation of Carl Rogers’ definition of empathy which states: the state of empathy or being empathic is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever loosing the ‘as if’ condition.

23 Gallo 109.

24 Gallo 109.
understanding the empathic experience. Most interesting is her use of "child-like receptivity" in discussing certain characteristics of the empathic and creative individual. Note also her use of Wordsworthian verse which she feels captures the "creative perceptual style":

    The eye—it cannot choose but see;
    We cannot bid the ear be still;
    Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
    Against or with our will.

    Nor less I deem that there are Powers
    Which of themselves our minds impress;
    That we can feed this mind of ours
    In a wise passiveness.\(^\text{25}\)

Gallo's use of verse is inspiring and vividly captures one very crucial point about the nature of the empathic experience. Sometimes it simply happens--without effort. White categorizes occurrences of this sort as receptivity.\(^\text{26}\) When one empathizes, one is at the receiving end of the phenomena--one is, in a sense, passive.\(^\text{27}\) The "wise passiveness" so beautifully described in Wordsworth's poem, *Expostulation and Reply*, helps one to understand having receptions. Wordsworth, in a following poem, speaks of a condition of attunement, "a heart that watches

\(^{25}\) Gallo 109.


\(^{27}\) I say "in a sense" because as Hee-soon Bai, in discussing reception, rightfully points out "when we reflect on how generative the NetBack is, then we begin to see reception in a different light from the initial understanding that it is passive, immutable, given and unique. We realize that there is really nothing passive about reception. On the contrary, it is an expression and function of an enormously dynamic cognitive and precognitive structure whose complexity is almost unfathomable. All one's biological and cultural determinants seem to come into play in determining a particular content of experience one would have at a given moment." Her assertion helps one to understand the enormous complexity of what really occurs while empathizing and perhaps how superficial it really is to call reception concepts "passive." See Hee-soon Bai, "Reception Explained in the Theory of Intentionality and its Implication for Education," unpublished paper, University of British Columbia, 1993: 20.
and receives."\(^{28}\) To be empathic is to be sensitive to the feelings of others. This sensitivity helps one to "receive." And what one receives, comes to one provided one has been oriented in the proper way (sometimes this may literally mean turning our heads in the right direction as one may do to hear a sound) and appropriately prepared. What is necessary for this "preparation" must be explored if we are to find a pedagogy appropriate to enhancing empathy.

1.5 Empathy as Imaginative Identification

Wiseman outlines four questions concerning the notion of empathetic identification of one person with another: (i) Is identification of one person with another possible?, (ii) Can we only identify with those who share our personal point of view?, (iii) How much of oneself must be "put into" the other to achieve identification with the other?, (iv) Are those persons who have weak imaginations and are naturally insensitive to others "losers" in the game of morality?\(^{29}\) She suggests a strategy for answering these questions and in doing so, concludes that not only can we identify with others, but we must be able to identify with them if we are to conceive ourselves as persons.

Rather than providing an analysis of the concept of empathetic identification, Wiseman examines cases where we do identify with others to discover what makes the identification successful. For Wiseman, empathetic identification is when one "deliberately imagines oneself to be having another's experience"\(^{30}\), yet always keeps a "distance"\(^{31}\) between oneself and the

\(^{28}\) Gallo 109.


\(^{30}\) Wiseman 107.
other. She uses aesthetic response to works of literature as her paradigm example. She argues that "our experience with works of art amply shows that we do emotionally identify with their characters, no matter how different from ours the world they inhabit" and the argument that empathetic identification of one person with another is impossible cannot be made against identification with characters in literature. She concludes that it makes sense to say that one can identify with others because one is capable of making the switch from one's own point of view to another's; that is, suspending one's own interest and partiality.

Wiseman also asserts that because it is disinterested and impartial this "understanding response" to characters in fiction serves as a paradigm of the imaginative experiment necessary to appreciate the experience of others. That is, "the aesthetic response is disinterested and impartial because the work of art describes a world different from the one in which our interests lie and our parts are played."33

Wiseman attends to the second problem which asserts the impossibility of changing one's ontological perspective by referring to aesthetic response. For Wiseman, when we respond aesthetically to a work of art, we "abandon our ontological perspective and adopt that of the work of art, which is a set of propositions that would be true or possible de re in the world of

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31 Wiseman suggests that aesthetic distance is a part of empathetic identification. That is, when one responds to a character in literature, one does not actually become the character who has the feeling or mood. If one does this, one loses the distance between oneself and the work, "responding to it no longer as art but as nature, as something that is part of the causal story of our affective state." When aesthetic distance is lost, one is "no longer empathetically identifying with, but [is], the one who is in a certain state." See 108.

32 Wiseman 109.

33 Wiseman 109.
the work were that world an actual one."\textsuperscript{34} She argues that one's experience with works of art proves the possibility of changing one's ontological perspective.

Yet, imagining ourselves under a description we are not now under, Wiseman asserts, is not sufficient for performing empathetic identification. This, I feel, is one of her strongest points. She tells us that "we must be able to imagine ourselves having a feeling response to what is imagined."\textsuperscript{35} For Wiseman, to imagine having a feeling involves one's affective structure very much in the same way that one's responses to works of art. "The imaginative experiment, the aesthetic experience, distances us from our historic selves."\textsuperscript{36} Wiseman concludes that one who can achieve distance from one's immediate and momentary feelings, can, therefore, empathetically identify with others.

Wiseman's article helps one to understand the possibility and importance of imagination in empathetic identification. To see the world from another's perspective, it is essential that one be able to imagine having feelings appropriate to another's point of view. I argue that imagination takes us "away" from our own perspective. It also enables us to make appropriate analogies between our own familiar experiences and the experiences of others. Through imagination we experience another's situation as a "participant" and not a "spectator" and can now return to our own subjective state with an appreciation of another's feelings in a situation. This, I believe, is essential for moral sensitivity and can only be provided by empathy. The imaginative component of empathy acts as the necessary vehicle which transports us from the

\textsuperscript{34} Wiseman 111.
\textsuperscript{35} Wiseman 113.
\textsuperscript{36} Wiseman 113.
"spectator" to "participant" perspective. And that transportation is an essential element in empathic understanding.

1.6 In Summary

While each of the articles reviewed offers some aspect of what empathy might entail, they each fail to provide a complete conceptualization of empathy and therefore can be considered inadequate or incomplete conceptions on which to build an appropriate pedagogy for promoting empathy in students, specifically within a program of moral education. Further, two of the conceptions discussed, namely empathy as projection and empathy as sympathy, can be antithetical to a moral education which aims at respecting the needs and concerns of others.

In the next chapter, I will further analyze the concept of empathy by briefly tracing its genealogy and pointing to further conceptual confusion that may stand in the way of education aimed at developing empathic understanding. This analysis will serve as a foundation on which to build a workable conception of empathy for moral education.
CHAPTER TWO--Conceptual Analysis

2.1 Brief Historical Background

Empathy has its origins in the German aesthetic theory of *Einfühlung*. Theodor Lipps, a German psychologist, was the main protagonist of this theory. According to the Lippsean formula, one imaginatively attributes to an object feelings or attitudes aroused in oneself by the object's depicted position and surroundings. These feelings, he held, are elicited through a kind of involuntary neurophysical response. Lipps believed that certain shapes of objects and the structural configurations in which they stand have the potential to evoke involuntary muscular and nervous system reactions consisting of a kind of imitation of the forces imagined to be operant in or upon the objects. In Lippsean theory, those reactions are not identified in one's own feelings, but are projected back onto the object. For Lipps, having the capacity to "feel oneself into" a work of art in a way which does not detract attention from the object is necessary for appreciation of a work of art.

In Lipps' earlier works concerning *Einfühlung*, he emphasizes the neuro-muscular reaction of the individual towards objects directly perceived. In his later work, however, Lipps introduces the "apperceptive activity" of the mind's "inner eye" and extends his analysis to how

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38 See Douglas Chismar, "Empathy and Sympathy: the Important Difference," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 22 (1988): 257-266. Here Chismar gives an example "...thus viewing a Doric column holding up a heavy stone arch is said to evoke an imitative kinesthetic response in the observer, inclining her to attribute to the column highly anthropomorphic qualities, such as that of doggedly straining to hold up the heavy weight."
we know others.\textsuperscript{39} Through \textit{Einfühlung}, Lipps attempts to explain how one person knows and understands another. Lipps divides the features of \textit{Einfühlung} into four parts with one pertaining to human beings—\textit{Einfühlung in the Sensuous Manifestation of Living Beings}.\textsuperscript{40} Lipps says of this feature:

Nobody doubts the fact that we cannot sensuously ascertain anything about a man whom we see, as the manifestations of his senses and his visible and audible expressions. But these sensuous manifestations are not the "man," they are not the strange personality with his psychological equipment, his ideas, his feelings, his will, etc. All the same, to us, the man is linked to these manifestations. The imaginative, feeling, willing individual is immediately apparent to us through his sensuous appearance, i.e. his manifestations of life. In a movement, grief, spite etc. is perhaps apparent to us. This connection is created through \textit{Einfühlung}.\textsuperscript{41}

Lipps argued that the mechanism responsible for such a "shared feeling" was not rooted in a cognitive ability to "think oneself through to another person," but in afferent feedback from the body's conscious or unconscious "motoric imitations" of the other's posture, gesture and expression.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39}Chismar (1988): 259.

\textsuperscript{40}Hundsahl tells of a curious replacement of the expression of "living being" with "man" in later explanations. Perhaps Lipps found it difficult to explain the inclusion of \textit{all} living beings in this kind of "connection." See Jorgen Hunsdahl, "Concerning Einfühlung (Empathy): A Concept Analysis of Its Origin and Early Development," \textit{British Journal of Aesthetics} 4.1 (1964): 93.

\textsuperscript{41}Hunsdahl 93.

\textsuperscript{42}Edith Stein takes Lipps to task on his idea of simple sensual appearance. She argues "I may [also] hear someone make an indiscreet remark and blush. Then I not only understand the remark and see shame in the blush but also discern that he knows his remark is indiscreet and is ashamed himself for having made it. Neither this motivation nor the judgment about his remarks is expressed by any sensual appearance." Here Stein makes her point justifiably that empathy is a form of knowing or understanding about another's experiences. See Edith Stein, \textit{On the Problem of Empathy} trans. Waltraut Stein (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff-The Hague,
It was the psychologist Titchener, who later translated Lipps notion of *Einfühlung* into "empathy." Titchener’s translation refers specifically to a subject’s awareness in imagination of the emotions of another person.\(^{43}\) Titchener used this notion mainly in his work on personality theory. It is primarily because of Titchener’s extension of "empathy" to the emotions that the term came to be most widely adopted by many psychologists. However, with increasing use came increasing ambiguity. Today, the term is vague and used in a variety of ways, with few relating to the original notion put forth by Lipps.

2.2 The Difference Between Empathy and Sympathy

Even before Lipps and his theory of *Einfühlung in the Sensuous Manifestation of Living Beings*, the phenomenon of a vicarious experience or imitation of another’s emotions was one which had already been noted at quite an earlier date. This, however, travelled under a different name—viz. *sympathy*. Sympathy was used quite frequently throughout the works of the 18C British moralists, namely Adam Smith and David Hume. Some argue that the denotation of the 18C *sympathy* is actually synonymous with what we now know as *empathy*.\(^{44}\) The two terms are still often mistakenly thought to be interchangeable. Consequently, they are frequently confused. Therefore, in attempting to make better sense of the concept "empathy," it is necessary to carefully distinguish between sympathy and empathy since both have subtle nuances.

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The term empathy, like sympathy, has in its etymology the root "pathy," that is, a connection to feelings or emotions. The prefix "em-", however, means "in", or in-feeling whereas "sym" implies same-feeling.

**Webster's Third New International Dictionary** defines empathy in the following ways:

1: the imaginative projection of a subjective state whether affective, conative or cognitive into an object so that the object appears to be infused with it: the reading of one's own state of mind or conation into an object (as an artistic object)

2: the capacity for participating in or a vicarious experiencing of another's feelings, volitions or ideas and sometimes another's movements to the point of executing bodily movements resembling his

On the other hand, sympathy is defined as follows:

1: correspondence in qualities, properties or disposition; mutual suitability

2a: an affinity, association or relationship between persons or things or between persons and things wherein whatever affects one, similarly affects the other
b: mutual or parallel susceptibility or a condition brought about by it (eg. a very young child will cry because a brother or sister is crying. Bertrand Russell)
c: unity or harmony in action or effect

3a: inclination to think or feel alike; emotional or intellectual accord
b: feeling of loyalty; tendency to favour or support; active interest

4a: the act or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings or interests of another; the character or fact of being sensitive to or affected by another's emotions, experiences or especially sorrows
b: the feeling or mental state brought about by such sensitivity; the expression or demonstration of this feeling

Both terms, according to these definitions, refer in some sense to the way in which an individual can participate in the *feelings* of another. By these definitions, it would seem that empathy allows one to sense what another is feeling, but does not entail the mutuality or "fellow-

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feeling" that would appear to be involved in sympathizing. Empathy is defined specifically in terms of projection—a definition that, as previously discussed in Chapter One, is ambiguous and highly problematic in understanding what sort of act empathy is. While these definitions provide a surface distinction in terms, they are obviously not sufficient in helping to sort out the conceptual confusion. The definitions do give us some idea of what sympathy and empathy might entail, but they are vague and open to varying interpretations.

Lauren Wispe provides a more detailed distinction between sympathy and empathy which can be found in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. It is important to take a closer look at his account, particularly because it has been written and published as a reference for social scientists. Wispe defines sympathy as "the capacity to apprehend the pain, suffering, or signs of negative emotions in man or animals and to respond to these with appropriate negative feelings." According to Wispe, sympathy is often an immediate, predominately emotional, awareness. The concept of sympathy, for Wispe, implies a fundamental capacity in man to respond to suffering. Sympathy can be construed as either passive (the capacity to respond) or active (the apprehension of suffering). In sympathy, states Wispe, the connotations of negative affect predominate.

Empathy, as defined by Wispe, is "the self-conscious effort to share and accurately

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46 I argue that empathy is not putting yourself in somebody else’s shoes to see what it would be like for *you* as might happen in the case of projection. Empathy involves seeing what it is like being the *other* person. See Yeuk Yi Pang and Elizabeth Rose Wojciechowicz, "Neither Beast Nor Machine: Coordinating the Emotional and Rational in Moral Education," *Eidos* 10.1 (June 1991): 35-38.

comprehend the presumed consciousness of another person, including his thoughts, feelings, perceptions and muscular tensions, as well as their causes.\footnote{Wispe (1958): 441.} He argues that in empathy, the one empathizing maintains an awareness of the imaginative nature of the transportation of oneself into another. And empathy, unlike sympathy, denotes an active subject (that is, empathizing is a voluntary or deliberate activity).

In empathy, Wispe further reports, one attends to the feelings of another; in sympathy, one attends to the suffering of another, but the feelings are one's own. That is, in empathy, I try to feel your pain; in sympathy, I know that you are in pain, and I sympathize with you, but I feel my sympathy and my pain, not your anguish or your pain.

Wispe further distinguishes the differences by proposing that empathy may be a "way of knowing" whereas sympathy is a "way of relating."\footnote{Wispe (1986): 318.} It may be useful to examine, comparatively, the specific differences as presented by Wispe.\footnote{My comparative examination is based very loosely on Chismar's critical study of sympathy and empathy as compared by Wispe. See Chismar (1983): 37.}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Empathy</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sympathy</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>1. one attempts to comprehend unjudgmentally the positive and negative</td>
<td>1. one is aware of the suffering of another person as something to be</td>
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<td>experiences of another self</td>
<td>alleviated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. one experiences the suffering of the other immediately</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. empathy depends on the use of imaginal and mimetic capacities and is</td>
<td>3. one’s self awareness is reduced rather than augmented—one is concerned</td>
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<td>most often an effortful process</td>
<td>with “communion” rather than assessment of the other’s feelings</td>
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<td>4. one is &quot;moved&quot; by the other person</td>
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<td>3. one’s self is the vehicle for understanding—one never loses one’s own</td>
<td>5. we substitute the other for ourselves</td>
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<td>identity because the feelings are in the other</td>
<td>6. one ‘is’ the other person</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. one attends to the primarily negative feelings of the other person</td>
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<td>4. one reaches out for the other person</td>
<td>8. one’s emotion may diverge from or go beyond those of the recipient (being</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>the feelings of oneself, not the recipient)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. one substitutes oneself for the other, to know what it would be like if</td>
<td>9. the object of sympathy is the other person’s well-being</td>
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<td>one was the other person</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. one acts ‘as if’ one was the other person</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. one attends to the feelings of the other person</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. one is limited to the same kind of emotion as experienced by the other</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. the object of empathy is to understand the other person</td>
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One of the strongest distinctions made by Wispe in this comparison is the deliberate or intended nature of empathy. This becomes apparent in his choice of such words as "attempts," "effortful," "reaches out," and "attends" in characterizing the term. For Wispe, one cannot have empathy for another without, in some sense, seeking to. This suggests that empathy’s nature is intentional. Yet sympathy, for Wispe, is often a non-intended response. Wispe would not deny that one could (and often does) have sympathy for another without taking any steps at all to do so.

It is also important to point out the conceptual link that exists for Wispe between sympathy and other concepts like compassion, care, "fellow-feeling" and the like. When sympathizing, one responds to the negative emotions of another while experiencing a "mutuality" with the other. In empathizing, however, one may suggest the rationality or understandableness of another’s emotions, but this does not in any way imply any kind of compassion, care or mutuality.

Wispe also limits empathy to a "cognitive set of abilities." He uses several epistemic terms in his description of empathy such as "knowledge," "understanding," and "comprehension." These terms imply that empathy means being right about another person’s feelings. For Wispe, the object of empathy is to understand the other person. This limitation appears to restrict empathy to those who are capable of developed forms of cognitive processing, as well as having a desire to "participate" in the emotional states of others.\(^5\)

While Wispe’s distinctions have provided a necessary step toward getting clearer about the line that must be drawn between the concepts of sympathy and empathy, his distinctions have

also helped to generate a number of important questions about the concept of empathy itself that must be addressed if one is to understand its strengths and limitations. In the next section, we look at a problematic dichotomy of the term empathy in psychological literature and begin to explore some questions that Wispe has helped to uncover such as: (i) Does it make sense to split empathy into cognitive or affective? (ii) Is empathy an ability of some sort? (iii) Is empathy an act that one intentionally carries out or is it something that happens to one?

2.3 The Dichotomization of Empathy into Cognitive or Affective: Making Sense of this Distinction

Much empirical work has been done over the last twenty years to examine empathy and its relationship to social/moral responsibility. Yet, the cognitive/affective dichotomy in this recent psychological literature on empathy has caused much confusion in making sense of the meaning of the term. I will point out some of the consequences that may arise from this false dichotomy. This section will explore through conceptual analysis the extent to which empathy encompasses "affective" as well as "cognitive" components and why it is confusing to separate the two.

2.3.1 Cognitive Focus

Theorists and researchers from this camp speak of empathy as understanding the

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psychology of thoughts, feelings and intentions through processes which are purely cognitive.\textsuperscript{53} Under the \textit{cognitive} empathy umbrella are included such abilities as perspective-taking, cognitive perspective-taking, social perspective-taking, role-taking, role-playing, social sensitivity awareness and person perception. Those who speak of empathy in these ways often measure empathy by performance in a test demanding a particular \textit{skill}. When treated as a skill, empathy is defined in terms of the achievement of a specific goal. The skill most often required for \textit{cognitive} empathy is the ability to predict others attitudes, opinions and emotions. Tests of social prediction accuracy, recognition of emotions from pictoral cues and the ability to role-take are all used as indications of the skills needed for the ability to empathize.\textsuperscript{54} Most theorists who take this perspective on empathy assume that extensive cognitive processing is the important part of, if not identical with, the skill which they call empathy.

\textbf{2.3.2 Empathy as Skill or General Ability}

If educators seek to produce or cultivate empathy in students, it is essential that our pedagogy reflect the logical properties of the concept. Yet, to treat empathy as identical to a skill is to improperly categorize the concept. Skills are capacities for carrying out tasks and tasks are things we do in an effort to succeed at something.\textsuperscript{55} Yet, we often explain what goes


\textsuperscript{54} Eisenberg and Strayer (1987): 219-220.

on when one is being empathic by using terms such as "recognize" and "realize." For example, the empathizer "recognizes" the emotions of another, "realizes" that the other has been harmed by an action or judgement made by oneself, and so on. "Recognizing" and "realizing" are not skills or tasks but outcomes or upshots. Likewise, when we say "I empathize with X's situation," we are also talking about an upshot or outcome. We cannot, as we can a skill, deploy empathy many times to accomplish our goal. Empathy, itself, is the outcome. Therefore any talk of practice, as we would do to perfect a skill or achieve a specific goal, is altogether out of place pedagogically.

And while empathy is an outcome, it is not necessarily an achievement such that it requires that we must engage in a specific set of tasks or trained proficiencies in order to come to empathize. That is why it may be confusing for the cognitive theorists to treat empathy solely as an achievement which is brought about by practicing particular skills such as predicting other people's attitudes and so on. An achievement is the possible culmination of a skill. Reception, such as empathy, is the result of proper orientation. That is, one needs to be oriented in such a way as to allow for empathy to occur. In particular, this involves ways of directing one's attention.

56 While reception concepts are originally discussed in White (1967), I have found Daniels' and Parkinson's article to provide a clear explication of White's work in relation to empathy. See Daniels and Parkinson 334-336.

57 Related to the notion of practice (that is, one can become good at empathizing through practicing doing it) is the mistaken assumption that empathy is a general ability (such as, say, intelligence). It is important to note that when we say that one has the ability to empathize, we do not mean that one can then empathize with anyone in any circumstance. Having empathy involves, in part, making inferences about another's feelings. And to make an inference in such a case, it is necessary to understand some things specific to the other person's circumstance with which we are empathizing.
Reception concepts seem to be related significantly to certain sensitivities (that is, to notice certain features or be aware of certain types of things) and in empathy those sensitivities involve the feelings of others. It is precisely these sensitivities to the feelings of others that psychologists who focus on the affective aspects of empathy wish to recapture in discussion and research on empathy.

2.3.3 Affective Focus

These theorists emphasize the affective, i.e. empathy as vicarious or shared affect. This type of empathy is claimed to have greater motivational force than cognitive empathy and most advocates strive to show the connection between empathy and pro-social behaviour, altruism or benevolence. One of the main reasons for an emphasis on the affective in empathy research is to include the possibility of experiencing empathy without any cognitive processing at all.\(^{58}\)

Some affective empathy theorists avoid insisting that empathy necessarily involves any efforts to know, understand or comprehend another's experience. This conception broadens the extension of the term empathy to include "sub-human species" as well young children and infants.\(^{59}\) The following is a recent set of definitions emphasizing the affective focus:

1. Empathy...entails emotional responsiveness to the feelings experienced by others and, as such, is an expressive experience (Bryant, chapter 11)

2. ...it suggests that empathy is an internal state or experience similar to an emotion. Second it implies that this emotional state can sometimes be recognized through imitative bodily movements

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\(^{58}\) Seen in this way, empathy most closely resembles the earlier works Lipps had done on motor mimicry and kinesthetic response to objects directly perceived.

3. a pattern of responses which are cued by the perceived situational context and/or emotionally expressive behaviour of the recipient which consists of states of "imitative" visceral and/or emotional arousal or activation of the subject.

Common to each of these definitions is that empathy is an *emotional, responsive* or *feelingful* experience. That is, in empathy one does not simply "know" what another is experiencing (as perspective-taking and the like might help us to do) but that empathy itself is "imbued with feeling."

While I agree that there must be something more to empathy than cognition, it becomes necessary at this point to stop and ask ourselves what it might mean to share another's feelings. As I briefly suggested in Chapter One, to say that we have a feeling of a similar kind to the person with whom we empathize cannot refer to *sensations*. Yet, these sensations are often mistakenly assumed as central because they are taken as what distinguishes one emotion from another, specifically among those who wish to treat emotions as private mental events, analogous to bodily sensations. Therefore, it is essential to get clear about the distinction between sensations, feelings and emotions. First, let us note important difference between sensations and what White calls *feelings of general condition*.

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Feelings of general condition are not themselves sensations or sensation-like occurrences.\(^6^3\) That is, they are not located in some one part of our body which can attract our attention. More importantly, we can make sense of the way in which one comes to know one’s own feelings but it does not make sense to speak of the means by which one learns of one’s bodily sensations. The means by which one comes to learn how to identify and differentiate among one’s own feelings are basically the same means by which others get to know of them—by observing the forms the experience takes.\(^6^4\) To become aware of another’s anger is to become aware of the form of another’s emotion, but not another’s sensation.\(^6^5\) As White points out, it is not the intrinsic characteristic that makes the emotion what it is, but its relationship to an object and a situation. A sensation may be aroused within us when sharing another’s emotion but it would make no sense to confuse this sensation alone with the emotion itself. What, then, is an emotion?

2.3.4 Logic of Emotions

Emotions are not identified primarily in terms of feelings—feelings can vary on a simple dimension such as intensity and pleasantness/unpleasantness. To speak of an emotion such as fear, is to refer to an appraisal on which the feeling is based. An emotion is a response of a

\(^6^3\) White separates feelings of general condition into four categories: completions, agitations, moods, emotion. See White (1967): 116-130.

\(^6^4\) But while feeling in a certain condition commonly involves feeling certain inclinations or certain sensations and sometimes behaving in certain ways, White points out that, for various reasons, one or another of these aspects of the general condition may be absent when the feeling is present (particularly sensations and behaviours).

\(^6^5\) An emotion can come in many forms in a varying degree of situational contexts. That is why it is important not to strictly confine any one emotion concept to either just facial cues or other restricting forms of external expression.
person, "at once cognitive and affective", to some aspect of a situation.66 The appraisal and the feeling are not two parts of an emotion.

Emotions necessarily have objects.67 That is, one cannot know that one has a certain emotion and yet not know, under some description, what the object is.68 The assessment or appraisal of the object is part of the analysis of the emotion. To have fear, one must see a situation as being dangerous, for envy, one must see someone possessing something we want and so on. Emotions, then, are basically forms of cognition. So, in empathizing, it becomes necessary to have some knowledge of the object of another's emotion. Reliance on another's physical manifestation, such as one's crying, on a "visceral reaction" (sensation) to another's perceived situation or some behavioural action does not necessarily help us to know or understand what emotion another is experiencing. While it may be argued that feelings, tendencies to behave in certain ways and certain physiological symptoms usually or even always accompany particular emotions, none of these or sometimes all of them taken together, tell us

66 Mike Parsons argues the same point and uses a very illuminating example which goes as follows: "...one may suddenly become aware, as one walks through the park, of a dangerous looking dog on the loose, and feel a little jolt of affect. The appraisal is already in the perception that the dog is dangerous looking; though careful inspection of the dog's behaviour may moderate that later." See Michael Parsons, "Empathy, Children and Literature," Philosophy and Education 8.1 (Summer 1973): 32.


68 I say "under some description" because even a very small child knows to some extent that she is sad because her mommy went out of the room or happy because daddy is affectionately tickling her toes. Although the child may not be able to verbalize what the object of her emotion is, she still knows it as such.
anything very important about the nature of the emotion. The crying individual may be experiencing tears of joy, fear, sorrow, anger, etc. Unless one becomes aware of the reason (object and appraisal) for that person's emotion through situational context, one may not be able to know what that emotion is and therefore cannot "share the emotion" with them.\(^{69}\)

While it is sometimes true that in fear we often feel our heart pounding and our body trembling, these sensations 1) need not be known (and therefore need not be shared) by other's and 2) cannot be picked out as the feeling of fear itself. To speak of having certain bodily sensations may be a precursor to having empathy but it would make no sense to equate that sensation alone with the emotion. Empathy must, then, involve some knowledge of the object of another’s emotion for it to be understandable and, thus, shared.

2.4 In Summary

This section has briefly traced empathy from its origination—the Lippsean aesthetic account—to current psychological uses of the term. Exploring the history of empathy has helped shed some light upon the nature of empathy as seen through different theorists accounts, while exposing certain problems that must be further considered in developing and justifying a conception of empathy that will be suitable for an education aimed at promoting more sensitive

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\(^{69}\) As pointed out to me by Pamela Courtnay-Hall, there may be cases involving strong and visible emotions where we do not need to know the specific reason for the emotion in order to feel empathy. She uses the example of seeing fear in the face and movements of a little child. In this case, according to Pamela, we do not need to know if the little child is lost, has seen a spider or a big dog, or has been bullied by an older child to empathize with what her face and movements tell us. I suspect that in the more "primitive" emotions, such as fear and anger, we may be more likely to recognize the emotion through visual cues and respond appropriately. However, in the more complex emotions such as jealousy, indignation and the like, it may be necessary for us to know more of the object and circumstance to recognize it as such, thereby enabling us to empathize.
and understanding students who can respect and appreciate others' life stances. The remainder of this thesis, then, will attempt to develop, explain and justify a conception of empathy for moral education.
CHAPTER THREE--Empathy Revisited: Developing a Conception of Empathy for Moral Education

Chapter One and Two were devoted to the collation and critique of various conceptions of empathy. It is my intention, in this section, to create a clearer picture of empathy to aid in the understanding of what educators can and should legitimately pursue when helping to cultivate and increase empathic understanding in students.

Chapter Three and Four, then, will be dedicated to the development of a conception of empathy for education—specifically moral education. In Chapter Three I argue that empathy must, first, be understood as a reception concept. Discussing the logic of receptions serves as the foundation on which one can begin to consider appropriate ways to "teach" empathy. Finally, Chapter Four will discuss the implications that my conception has for moral education.

3.1 Taking a Closer Look at Reception Concepts: Receptivity vs. Activity

The eye—it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.  

Wordsworth's lyrics point out an important aspect of reception concepts—that is, what one receives comes from orienting oneself to the subtle influences of the external world.  


71 One word of caution to the reader. In speaking of mind as "passive," I do not believe that Wordsworth means that it is altogether passive. While the mind can select what to attend to, or pick an object on which to focus, it cannot choose what to be influenced by or how it will be influenced.
To be responsive, one must be able to "receive." And if one is equipped and appropriately prepared to receive what the external will bring, one stands to gain immeasurably.

Human beings are sentient and rational creatures--sensitive in perception both in senses and the mind. What one perceives, apprehends, notices is received sometimes into one's consciousness: this is what it is to have receptions. Reception concepts such as seeing, noticing, realizing, becoming conscious of, becoming aware of can be best understood in terms of receptiveness. That is, in noticing or realizing, and so on, one is receptive to outside impressions or influences which catch one's attention. For example, when one notices that another's feelings are hurt, the feelings of the other strike one in a way which draws one's attention to it.\textsuperscript{72}

Now let's take an example of empathy. My friend, beaming with joy, tells me that she is pregnant. I see joy in her face and hear her exclaim her news with vigour and excitement. I grasp her joy empathically; that is, I sense her joy, I am transferred into it, I grasp the joyfulness of the event from her perspective and am now joyful over it myself. I have become aware of my friend's experience. In short, I empathize with her.

"Becoming aware" describes not one's doing experiences, but what one receives.\textsuperscript{73} Empathy is not an activity but a result. But, while empathy is a result, it is not something that

\textsuperscript{72} It is often argued that empathy is a passive experience. Yet, it is important to make clear that receptivity and activity are "not as mutually exclusive as passive and active may be. To be fully receptive--to be a good listener, for instance--necessitates an active stand." Alfie Kohn, \textit{On the Brighter Side of Human Nature: Altruism and Empathy in Everyday Life} (New York: Basic Books, 1990) 116-117. I argue that having empathic receptions is the upshot of being oriented in the proper way.

\textsuperscript{73} White characterizes reception concepts in this way. See Alan White, \textit{Attention} (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964) 23-27.
one can bring about by methodical effort (i.e. role-play, perspective-taking, etc.) We do not use methods to become aware of another’s experience. This is a crucial aspect of reception concepts that has direct bearing on "educating for empathy." Here, I would like to suggest the use of an analogy to exemplify my point. Konstantin Stanislavsky, 20th century dramatist and theorist, argued against using routine acting methods (i.e. systems of expression: voice, diction, gesture) alone to portray a character. To him, this deliberate attempt to imitate emotions created mechanical characters and often lead to stereotyped acting. Stanislavsky developed a workable theory of acting which drew on the actual emotional life experiences of the actor to stimulate the actors' imagination and sensitivity. The feelings that the actors experience in relation to a character's situation are what enable the actor to enter emotionally into the character’s situation and portray those passions as if they were his own. Stanislavsky argued that an actor cannot receive these feelings by systematic artificial means or training methods. Stanislavsky’s "method," then, involves letting one’s natural impulses dominate. He concentrates on creating favourable conditions for the actor in which inspiration, sensitivity and imagination can occur. Actors studying Stanislavsky are taught to be prepared to receive the "feeling experiences" of a character’s situation (partly through "reliving" one’s own past experiences), not simply imitating or mimicking them by systematic means.

I use this analogy to strengthen my discussion of empathy as reception and the

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74 Many theorists speak of empathy as an achievement. For example, Ashby and Lee define empathy as "a difficult intellectual achievement." Ultimately, Ashby and Lee’s article talks about constructing "strategies for achieving empathy." This is misleading for, as I already mentioned previously, it mistakenly implies that there are skills or tasks which will lead to its completion. See Rosalyn Ashby and Peter Lee, "Children's Concepts of Empathy and Understanding in History," The History and Curriculum for Teachers ed. C. Portal (Lewes: Falmer Press, 1987) 62-88.
implications that it has for teaching empathy. We do not produce a reception such as empathy through procedural or systematic means. As White properly puts it, "when we notice something, we are struck by it, it makes an impression on us and then we receive knowledge of it. What is noticeable is conspicuous or stands out, just as what is interesting attracts our attention... Although appropriate schooling and practice can put us in a condition to notice what we used to miss, people cannot be taught, nor can they learn how to notice as they can be taught or learn how to detect. Noticing, unlike solving, is not the exercise of a skill." While we do "try," in a sense, to have empathy for others, we do not follow a certain procedure to guarantee its production. The kind of trying involved in having empathy for another involves two aspects. We acquire appropriate concepts and some sorts of understanding as a result of our own experiences and we learn to orient ourself.

Reception, such as empathy, is the result of proper orientation, perceiving a situation in a particular way, and having appropriate emotion concepts which are often the result of our own experiences which are analogous to others' experiences. Therefore, one needs to be suitably prepared and oriented in such a way to allow for empathy to occur.

3.2 Having Empathic Receptions: A Link to the Moral Dimension

Having empathy involves the capacity to have certain receptions. What an empathic person has that an unempathic person does not have is a complex set of dispositions to notice feelings in others that would otherwise have been missed. The capacity to have empathic

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76 I thank Dr. LeRoi Daniels for patiently helping me to understand reception concepts and to sort out what is involved in having empathic receptions.
receptions is absolutely essential to morality. Empathic receptions evoke within us the capacity to sense the feeling and suffering of others from their perspective. Empathy involves a certain sensitivity which is necessary to recognizing the moral aspects of a situation. And what we want in moral education is for students to be sensitive to situations in which the welfare of others is at stake. We want them to have empathic receptions because these receptions help them to notice such things as injustice and the like. In empathy, we are able to get beneath the surface appearance of others and feel the experience of another "as if" from the "inside-out."

We can look at having empathic receptions as a kind of habit of the mind with moral overtones. If we want to use the concept of empathy for moral education, we must go beyond our ordinary understanding of the word as discussed thus far, and relate the concept to a set of compassionate dispositions. That is, the empathic person is disposed to act in certain ways which involve seeing others as fully human and having a genuine concern for the welfare of others. The concept of empathy must go beyond our ordinary language use to be of significant use in an education aimed at promoting respect for others. It must be stipulated that having empathic receptions involves taking the humanity of another seriously.77

Taken out of this context, empathy can become a tool for those who wish to manipulate

77 An important distinction to consider is one between compassion and pity. In contrasting the two, Blum concedes compassion to be morally superior. For Blum, in pity "one holds oneself apart from the afflicted person and from their suffering thinking of it as something that defines that person as fundamentally different from oneself... This would necessarily involve condescension." See Lawrence Blum, "Compassion," Explaining Emotions ed. Amelie Oksenberg-Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 512. This very point is also relevant when considering the significant difference between empathy and sympathy. When we sympathize, we have feelings of concern and very often pity for the other. If viewed as fundamentally different from ourselves, the other will remain distanced and may not receive appropriate respect for her condition.
others for personal gain. But the person who has true empathy for another must perceive that person quite differently from one who is simply out to manipulate and exploit as is the case with, let’s call it, mock empathy. It is not hard to imagine one who identifies and participates in the experiences of others in order to discover their weakness and so exploit or destroy them.\textsuperscript{78} Take, for example, the con artist. Surely the best of cons must be aware of the feeling experiences of others to gain a better understanding of how to manipulate them. The con artist, for example, who thrives on deceit by winning the trust and confidence of others while they are vulnerable to his prey finds his victims by paying close attention to their emotional needs. He positions himself in their lives by imitating empathetic acts thereby winning their trust and heart. He offers them false support, companionship, love and so on but all in a plot to gain possession, typically, of their material goods. For the con artist, his trophy is the wealth gained through another’s suffering. For the victim, not only are possessions lost but the victim is also scarred emotionally. However, it would be a terribly corrupt version of the concept if empathy was understood as involving exploitation or degradation. A proper conception of empathy must, then, prohibit any exploitation or degradation from the onset--specifically if we are to promote empathy in moral education.

Therefore, having empathy for another must involve a certain way of perceiving the other. The recognition of the "humanness" of others is what bridges the gap between merely "displaying" empathy or mock empathy (as does the con artist) and genuinely having empathic

\textsuperscript{78} As brought to my attention by Pamela Courtnay-Hall, there are also less malevolent cases where people feign empathy--i.e. out of wanting to appear either kind or fair, whether to the person herself or to others who may be watching. I agree that these cases are perhaps much more common than the con, as mentioned, and therefore are examples worthy of inclusion.
receptions. In genuine empathy for another, we perceive the other as having worth or value in their own right and not only in terms of their relationship to us or in terms of our own personal interests and desires. This is what sets the empathic person apart from the con artist. The empathic person recognizes that the other is a human being and appreciates that persons, as such, have intrinsic value.

Having empathic receptions, then, involves in part being compassionately disposed to perceive people as fully human.\textsuperscript{79} It implies a kind of care for another in which the well-being of another is not directed toward one's \textit{own} satisfaction or advantage. We establish a relationship with the other in which we appreciate not only the others' distinctive point of view but also see the other as a human being and recognize that we share that attribute.\textsuperscript{80} As Kohn so aptly puts it, "'this emotional unity of the unity of mankind' as a species is not a contrivance to be employed on special occasions; it is a mode of being in the world, a way of living. It emerges from the acknowledgement that one's meaning—one's own humanness—depends on affirming the subjectivity of others."\textsuperscript{81} As Kohn further argues, without this relationship of "shared humanness," there is no overcoming the distance that often allows us to turn people into mere abstractions.

The failure to regard another as fully human (or the failure to take that humanity sufficiently seriously or treat the other solely as a means to one's own end) builds a great barrier obstructing empathic receptions. When we perceive others as less than human, it becomes easy

\textsuperscript{79} To perceive another as fully human is to regard another as a fellow human being who is worthy of treatment in a manner due of all persons, simply because they are persons.

\textsuperscript{80} Kohn 142.

\textsuperscript{81} Kohn 142.
to relate to them as such and thus helps justify to ourselves turning away from their plight or suffering, blocking our capacity for having empathic receptions. I cannot recall how many times I have witnessed busy commuters and the like literally stumbling over the countless homeless men and women sleeping in Grand Central Station. The commuters deliberately avert their attention away from the misfortune of these many men and women in such a way so as to avoid confrontation and in so doing fall over them in anger and disgust. Stripped of their humanity, these homeless seem to many "subhuman" and therefore, unworthy of acknowledgement and respect.

Likewise, when a sexist treats and perceives women as mere objects of sexual desire, it becomes extremely difficult if not impossible for the sexist to believe, let alone have empathy for, a rape victim. With the help of certain images in advertising, soft pornography, and so on, the sexist turns women into objects, eroticizing their degradation, making it seem as though women in aggressive sexual encounters such as rape somehow deserve their plight. How often do we hear comments like "she shouldn't have been wearing such a tight outfit" or "what was she doing roaming about by herself at that hour," and so on. This objectification of women certainly has a dehumanizing effect. Seen in this light, having empathy becomes impossible for the sexist because the woman who has been raped is perceived as merely an object of sexual gratification and the severity of the violence against her becomes trivialized.\textsuperscript{82}

The point to be made is that a narrow conception of persons is truly detrimental to having empathic receptions. Perceiving other people as mere abstractions makes it easy for us to draw

\textsuperscript{82} It is important to note that this in this particular example I am looking at the problem of sex-objectification in one of its most severe manifestations, but there are certainly empathy-related problems in less extreme sex-objectification cases as well.
boundaries between "us" and "them." These boundaries block us from appreciating the humanity of others by creating the illusion that we are somehow fundamentally different and could not possibly share the experiences that "they" experience.

Having empathic receptions involves becoming participant in another subject's experience and, in order to do that, the one having empathy must regard the other as a fellow human being, capable of feelings akin to all human beings. But in empathy, while we share with one another a "humanness," we at the same time recognize how we differ from others. While the empathic individual must appreciate another's "humanness," she must also recognize the other’s distinctive point of view— the subjectivity of others.

Having empathy also involves making inferences about other’s feelings and it is therefore necessary to know some things about the other person such as their individual beliefs, values or lifestyle. In having empathy, we view other persons in both the abstract and the particular. Not only do we recognize our "shared humanness" with another but through empathy, we also come to understand something of the "inner experiences" of another person from their distinctive point

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83 In a recent empirical study carried out by myself and a colleague, Yeuk Yi Pang, a group of twelfth graders were asked if Native students should be expected to attend schools which teach only non-Native culture. They were then asked to imagine themselves, as Native, having to live with the consequences of their own decision. Some students were unwilling, and I suspect unable, to have empathy for a group of people who they believed were "nothing but a group of drunken, disorderly Indians."

84 Blum recognizes the failure to regard others as fully human as detrimental to having compassion for others. He states, "that a white colonist in Africa does not imagine to himself the cares and sufferings of blacks whom he rules cannot be separated from the fact that he does not see them as fully human." This is the same point I wish to make concerning empathic receptions. See Blum (1980): 510.

85 Kohn 151.
of view.\footnote{Kohn 151.} Once we recognize another as both fully human and distinctive, this opens up the opportunity for the acquisition of knowledge of another's experience through empathic reception which feeds our imagination to help us move from "spectator" to "participant" in which we feel (in an analogous sense) the experience as the other feels it.

3.3 From Spectator to Participant: Imagination as the "Vehicle"

As discussed, empathy is grounded not in personal desire or interest, but rather in the nature of the other. We recognize the other as a subject—a centre of experience. The other is not just an object in my own world but the centre of a distinctive world of her own. In having empathy, I am, in a strange sense, brought "outside" of myself, not just outside of my usual manner of thinking.\footnote{Stein 58-59.} I am not just imagining but partaking (that is, feeling emotions) in another's experience. Once all this is understood, it affects the view I have of myself. Not only am I transformed by coming to know another through having empathy but I have a new way of conceiving my self-relatedness to others. I am no longer simply a spectator of others' situations. I now participate in their circumstance as they have. I am affected by my emotional engagement with the other through empathic reception.

Each of us is the reference point for our own understanding of what it means to be a subject of experience. My own "subjectiveness" refers to myself and no other. It constitutes my own individuality—"a stream of consciousness and actual experiences lived by me alone."\footnote{Stein 60.} But in empathy, we must move from our own "subjectiveness" to the subjective experience of
another. What sense can we make of this transportational phenomenon?

In my own subjectiveness, I am always "here," while others are always "there." In a sense, I am, as Edith Stein points out, at the "zero point of orientation" with all other things and persons in relation to me. She argues, however, that in this transition we do not shift from our zero point of orientation to the other's. As Stein tells us, "it is impossible to be absolutely rid of our own perspective." Yet, she continues, "when we interpret another as a sensing human being and have empathy for them, we actually obtain a new image of the world around us along with a new point of orientation." She states further that this image is not only a modification of our own image on the basis of another's orientation, but it also varies with the way in which we interpret the other's experience. When we accomplish the transition from our standpoint to the other's, we are not looking at the world in one way and then in another, but in both ways at the same time. We transfer ourselves into the other's orientation through what we imagine the other to be experiencing. From the viewpoint of the zero point of orientation gained in empathy, we must no longer consider our own zero point as the zero point, but as one spatial point among many. By this means, she concludes, we learn to see ourselves like others.

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89 Stein 48.

90 Stein 39-46.

91 Stein 44. Stein's argument is helpful in understanding why it seems odd to speak of "stepping into another's shoes" as if we somehow leave ourselves completely behind. In empathy, we retain our "zero point" and our own orientation while at the same time obtaining the other one.

92 Stein 44.

93 Stein 39-46.
I will begin with a simpler example of this notion by first considering shifting one's own perspective. For instance, I am now sitting at my computer, writing this thesis. From this perspective, things are presented to me in a certain fashion. My back is to the kitchen. I can look out the window onto Cardero Street. I can easily reach the phone for a call. Yet, it is not impossible to imagine myself standing on Cardero Street looking up through my window. Now obviously, my physical self has not disappeared—I actually continue to sit at my computer. My "I" has, in a sense, been doubled, so that even though the real "I" cannot be released from my body, I can indeed slip out of my skin in imagination. I can at once be both "spectator" of my own situation as well as "participate" in what I am doing.

In empathy, I comprehend the other's feeling experience as if I were experiencing such a feeling—as if I were having an "inner awareness" of the experience including what it feels like to have had such an experience. At the heart of empathy is the imagination which acts as a "vehicle" transporting me from being a spectator of another's experience to participating in that experience. It is in the imagination that we are able to empathize with another. The imaginative reconstruction involved in having empathy consists in what the other person, given her character, beliefs, values is undergoing, rather than what we ourselves would feel in her situation.94 Therefore, expanding our powers of imagination also expands our capacity for having

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94 Recall those theorists who wish to characterize empathy in terms of identification. This is extremely problematic because identification with another does not necessarily mean seeing things as the other would see it. In identifying with another's circumstance, we may simply imagine what it would be like for ourselves, with our own beliefs, values, etc. This is inappropriate for empathic understanding.
What we imagine, however, does not come out of nowhere. Our imagination is grounded in our own experiences. Our own experiences and perceptions of the world around us act as the foundation on which all of our understanding is built. Therefore, in order to understand another's experience, I must first "link" it to other similar experiences familiar to me. In having empathy, the knowledge I receive about the other "blends" with my own knowledge, understanding and emotional "data bank" of experiences to help me to imagine what it would be like to participate in somebody else's experience.

However, it is not necessary that I experience another’s situation exactly the same as they do. This is not only unnecessary but impossible. I cannot be "released" from my own body--empathy is not a complete transition from myself to the other. I remain at myself, but my own feelings and constitution take a "back seat" to the feelings of another.

3.4 Knowledge and Emotion: Awareness of Other People's Emotional States and Circumstances

My previous discussion of emotions and their dependency on objects and appraisals necessitates further elaboration of what one needs to know about the other person and her circumstances before one can empathize with her. The important part of such knowledge of others is knowing what individuals experience. That is, what they feel emotionally; knowing what it is like to have particular emotions in certain circumstances.

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95 I believe that persons who are poor at imagining the experience of others may well be less likely to have empathy for them.

96 A common argument is that one cannot possibly "know" how another feels because one can never stand directly in "the other's shoes" to understand fully how they feel.
I have already argued that feeling alone is not sufficient to account for emotions. While it is true that emotions essentially involve feelings, this is not all there is to having an emotion. The central feature of emotions is that they are directed onto objects (i.e. Jeremy is fearful that he will lose his job.) But the object must be understood in a certain way. That is, emotions also involve appraisals evoked by external conditions. And the way in which emotions differ from one another is in the difference in what is appraised. Evaluations or appraisals are a crucial ingredient in the analysis of emotion. For instance, if I were walking through Stanley Park and heard a rustling noise in the bushes, I would feel afraid if I thought the noise was being made by an assailant. To feel fear is to see a situation as dangerous. But, if the noise turned out to be my brother hiding in the bushes waiting to scare me, my fear would probably turn into anger. Fear differs from anger mainly because in fear we see something as threatening whereas in anger we see it as frustrating. An emotion, then, involves cognition or understanding. The object has to be understood as threatening or harmful for one to be afraid of it. And it is the evaluation or appraisal of both object and situation which involves a change of emotion from, in this case, fear to anger. Ultimately, it is a person's view of her circumstances which is essential to experiencing emotions.

Because people can experience emotions without feeling anything in particular, doing anything in particular or displaying any physiological symptoms, the cognitive element of emotions becomes a crucial element for having empathy. It is this element which helps us to make sense of what others experience and enables us through imagination to participate in their experience by drawing on our own past analogous experiences. Without knowledge of the object and appraisal of another's emotion in a particular circumstance (i.e. what's making them angry,
jealous, fearful, indignant, etc.) we would not be able to relate our own prior experiences to their circumstance. Once we know how another perceives a circumstance, then we are able to imaginatively partake in their experience. The cognitive element, then, is essential to an understanding of another's feelings.

3.5 Degrees of Empathy

I suspect that we probably empathize most often with those people who are most familiar to us. Many couples often feel that, after several years of sharing a life together, they can communicate without having to say what they think or feel. Mothers/primary caretakers feel that they are emotionally connected to their children in ways that others are not. Many of us quickly recognize when something is bothering a good friend long before the friend says what is on her mind. There is nothing mysterious about this intuitive connection. The more we know about another person, and the more central role that they play in our lives, the easier it becomes to empathize with them without any conscious effort. Contact with people, then, can make us subtly aware of their interests, attitudes, points of view and aspirations so that we are able to sense intuitively the way they look upon the world. The closer we get to people and the better we come to know them, the deeper becomes our understanding of their way of life.\footnote{This argument is not meant to restrict the empathic experience to immediate personal contact or family members and close friends. It may very well be the case that person X is more familiar with and attuned to the plight of the Somalis and is therefore better able to empathize with them than with the people who are more closely situated to her.}

The less we know about a people and their way of life (and certainly the less they figure in our lives), the more difficult it may become for us to empathize with them. Further, we each have life-long habits of intuiting, thinking and valuing which may block our understanding of
another's experience which is very different from the experiences we are familiar with. Let's take an example. In India, having a girl is perceived by many citizens as a failure on the part of a woman. Many women who have girl children are alienated and rejected by the man who has fathered the child and, in some cases, even by their immediate family. Ultrasound enables these women to find out if they will have a girl or a boy, and consequently, many abortions are performed on women who are carrying girl children. If I know nothing of the cruelty and shame a woman experiences as a result of her circumstance in this country, and am privileged enough to live in a society where such pressures are non-existent, I can not possibly be receptive to the kinds of feelings she experiences. I will not understand how it feels to be in her situation and may be quick to pass judgment from my own limited perspective.

Further, the closer our own experiences are to the experiences of others, the more receptive we will be to their feelings and the more fully we will be able to have empathy for them. If a woman has just recently been divorced from a husband who was abusive, she will surely be better prepared to have empathy for a woman in like circumstances than someone who has never been through such an experience. I become less and less empathic as the gap between my own experiences and another's increases. Practical knowledge, then, is the basis for the highest degree of empathy.

If we do not have first-hand, first-person practical knowledge of another's circumstance, we are still able to translate another's experience into an experience that we can understand and therefore participate in by recalling and reflecting on our own experiences that are analogous to the others. Let us take an example of analogous experience. I find myself both frustrated and angry every time I needlessly struggle with my baby carriage to get up onto the curb of a
sidewalk after crossing the street, or awkwardly maneuvering down a narrow aisle at the 
supermarket or being, in a sense, restricted from entering certain buildings or shopping malls 
because there are too many stairs for me to climb successfully with a carriage. This experience 
of frustration and anger can help me to better understand a person in a wheelchair who is angrily 
struggling to get up onto the sidewalk or unable to enter certain places, and so on. While I have 
had no actual experience of ever being confined to a wheelchair, I feel as though I can (to a 
degree), understand what it feels like to be frustrated and angry when unable to enter certain 
buildings etc., which have no facilities for those who are physically challenged. In fact, my 
analogous experience probably makes me more sensitive and receptive to those kinds of feelings 
in others. Through imaginative inference based on my own experience, I gain understanding. 

So while we may not have experienced exactly what another is going through, we still 
may be sensitively open to another’s feelings to some degree as a result of our own personal 
experiences which in some way are similar to another’s. Some sort of understanding as a result 
of one’s own personal experiences is essential in having empathy. There is a continuum between 
it and practical knowledge.
CHAPTER FOUR—"Teaching Empathy": Some Speculation About How Educators Might Attempt to Foster Empathic Persons

There are certainly limits to what can be known or understood about another person without imaginatively entering into that person's position. For this reason, methods like role-play, role-taking or role exchange (all empathy concepts that are used as teaching tools to help students understand and appreciate another's point of view) may contribute to the understanding of another's perspective. However, based on the conception of empathy that I am advancing, methods like role-play/-taking/-exchange may be too limited or inadequate to help students develop the capacities and dispositions necessary to become an empathic person. As argued throughout this thesis, being empathic involves having knowledge and understanding of others, having the ability and disposition to imagine oneself in the emotional experience of another to feel (to a certain degree) what it is like to have such an experience, being sensitively open and attending to the feelings of others, and having the disposition to treat others as fully human while having a genuine concern for their welfare. As educators seeking to foster more empathic persons, we must concentrate on this set of criteria which aims at cultivating in students those capacities and dispositions necessary to having empathic receptions and compassion.

In this chapter, I shall first explain more fully what methods such as role-taking, role-play and role exchange entail and specifically argue why they are, by themselves, limited and therefore inadequate in preparing students for appropriate empathic receptions. I will also briefly discuss the implications which my fuller conception of empathy has for helping educators to cultivate empathic understanding and foster more empathic persons.
4.1 Empathy Concepts in Moral Education

4.1.1 Role-Taking

This ability is best defined by one of its major advocates as "the ability to understand the interaction between the self and another as seen through the other's eyes. This definition implies an ability to make specific inferences about another's capabilities, attributes, expectations, feelings and potential reactions." Role-taking is characterized as a skill that can be developed by practicing role-playing.

4.1.2 Role-Playing

This technique involves having students actually participate or "act out" a part in a simulated social situation. Advocates of this activity hope that the information gained through the exercise will provide the student with first-hand knowledge of what it is like to be positioned in a certain situation as well as helping the student to feel what it is like to be treated in an improper (or unjust) manner. In this way, many feel that the practice of role-playing is a valuable exercise to be used in moral education.

4.1.3 Role Exchange

Role exchange, unlike role-playing or role-taking, depends solely upon imagination. When I talk about role exchange, I am not referring to the method often practiced in psychotherapy and counselling sessions where people (i.e. married couples, partners in intimate relationships, parents/children, etc.) are asked to face one another while taking on the other's role--acting the role out as they perceive the other person to be. I categorize this kind of method

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99 Daniels and Parkinson 336.


101 When I talk about role exchange, I am not referring to the method often practiced in psychotherapy and counselling sessions where people (i.e. married couples, partners in intimate relationships, parents/children, etc.) are asked to face one another while taking on the other's role--acting the role out as they perceive the other person to be. I categorize this kind of method
Because imaginative engagement is a necessary step to empathic understanding, role exchange may be a better exercise for cultivating empathy than concentrated emphasis on external behaviour (or "the act" of role-play). Further, in role exchange the student is asked to consider only those items about another which are necessary in adopting the moral point of view. That is, the student is not to imagine that she is in everybody else’s shoes (as she may end up doing in a role-playing exercise), but in the shoes of the most disadvantaged. The concentration is on a particular kind of perception—the student is not free to see just anything. Role exchange, then, helps to direct a student’s attention to the moral features of a situation.

4.2 Limitations to Existing Methods

In role-playing/-taking, specifically, the exercise is practiced—sometimes without any distinct body of knowledge (or a limited body of knowledge) beyond the immediate simulated circumstance. This being the case, students must rely on their own information and resources. Yet, if the students’ resources are limited, or the information they bring to the simulation is inaccurate, the exercises may actually be ineffective in helping students imaginatively participate in the experience as the other experiences it. Proper imaginative inference can not take place as role-play.

102 The role exchange test is an intellectual exercise which is designed to challenge the value principles implicit in students’ moral judgments. It does this by asking them to consider if the consequences of their judgment or action would be acceptable if they, themselves, had to suffer the consequences. Ultimately, it asks the students to decide whether they think it right or wrong for someone to do that to them, and to revise their principle accordingly. See Jerrold R. Coombs, "Validating Moral Judgments by Principle Testing," Development of Moral Reasoning: Practical Approaches eds. Cochrane and M. Manley-Casimir (New York: Praeger, 1980) 30-53. While this test is not presented by Coombs as synonymous to empathy, the conceptual link between it and empathy is apparent. The practice alone, however, is insufficient for increasing and cultivating empathic receptions in students.
without appropriate knowledge and understanding. Without an understanding of another's experience, the basis for imaginative inference is not altered. ¹⁰³ Further, emphasis solely on the practice of imitating the role of another (that is, concentration on "the act" as in dramatic role-play) may actually distance students from another's plight, thereby rendering the activity devoid of sensitivity and the requisite imaginative participation. ¹⁰⁴

Perhaps most importantly for a moral education program, all three "role" methods fail to emphasize the significance of treating others as fully human and having a genuine concern for other people's welfare. If students are not encouraged to see a common humanity in all people, empathic receptions may be blocked by prejudice, stereotypical thinking, racism, etc. Methods such as role-play/-taking/-exchange do not overtly help students understand why they should

¹⁰³ Interactive theatre is the current theatre of choice for those who wish to explore serious social/moral issues. This kind of theatre is purported by its advocates to raise the social consciousness of the group through empathic awareness and involvement. The basic recipe is as follows: the audience watches the play once through without stopping; the second time around, the audience members may stop the play when they feel that someone is being treated badly; finally, that audience member must come up on stage and put herself in the position of the character who she perceived as being ill-treated. This interaction is meant, in part, to get people to understand what it feels like to be in somebody else's situation. One of the main problems with this attempt at empathic involvement is the very limited knowledge about and understanding of the characters' situation that the audience gains from a twenty-minute play. We must not underestimate the essential role that both knowledge and understanding play in the empathic experience. Understanding another's situation is essential to accurately judge what she is feeling. Depending on the character's situation, the audience may require a more extensive look at the conditions of the character whose perspective they wish to take. The gap between the audiences' experiences and the experiences of the characters in the play may be too wide to bridge with such limited understanding. This being the case, proper imaginative inference may not be possible as a way to cultivate empathic understanding. Perhaps the best this exercise can do is make the audience aware of their limited knowledge and understanding of certain groups of people.

¹⁰⁴ Role-play is often directed to the end of effective simulation. This is the main difference between empathy, which is directed to the end of appropriate care, and simulated methods like role-play.
form sensitivities to others.

Finally, these methods often emphasize engaging in the activity (i.e. role-playing/-exchange) on the mistaken assumption that doing so gives one practice in being empathic, and that such practice improves one's ability to empathize. As noted previously, this view is mistaken because empathy is not an activity in which we can attain proficiency by practicing it. Empathy, properly understood, is the outcome of certain things that went on before--and those things are not *necessarily* activities like role-play/-taking/-exchange. Although particular abilities like role-play, etc. are often made possible by the occurrence of empathy, they should not be confused with the occurrence itself. Empathy, as this notion is developed and justified throughout this thesis, is a reception concept and our pedagogy must reflect the logic of this kind of concept. Being an empathic person is not a matter of having a skill that can be acquired through practice, but of having the disposition and capacity to enter imaginatively into the emotional experiences of others. I am not denying that methods such as role-exchange and the like may help us to understand others to a certain extent. I am simply denying that this is all there is to helping prepare people for empathic receptions. There are several things that can be done to prepare people for appropriate empathic receptions and in none of these are skill or practice relevant. The next section will discuss ways in which educators can put students in the position to be receptive to the feelings of others.
4.3 Implications for Moral Education

...the growth in our understanding of a person may be viewed as an increase in our vision of him; we may see him from a wider point of view, from more aspects... knowledge and understanding of other people [is attained] by way of increased experience, general knowledge of people, and above all perhaps by way of an imaginative approach to them. We could not do this without experience of and insight into the relationships that we have with others.105

Putting people in a position to be receptive is very different from teaching them a skill or method. And while the conception that I am defending does suggest that empathy is mainly a response that happens to one (a reception), that is not to suggest that we are mere recipients in the process. There is much that can be done to get a student to a state of sensitive openness necessary for an empathic reception. We, as educators, can encourage the voluntary development of certain ways of thinking which will facilitate an increased sensitivity and appreciation of others. The following sections will introduce what preparing a student for appropriate empathic receptions might involve. These sections are all interrelated and are, together, meant to be directed to suggesting possible means of developing appropriate care and respect for others.

4.3.1 Providing Resources

Providing resources and situations to help students understand the perspective of another is essential to any program seeking to promote empathy. As discussed earlier, knowledge and understanding aid in imaginative inference--a crucial component of the empathic experience. Educators, then, should expose students to a network of information about other people--information that helps students to recognize both differences and similarities between various

ways of life. Making students aware of cross cultural standards, principles and ideals helps provide them with the information needed to recognize those commonalities and differences.

4.3.2 Sharing Experiences

Making the connection between other peoples' emotional experiences and our own through meaningful analogy is another essential feature of empathic understanding. We gain, in part, some sort of understanding of what another feels as a result of our own experiences. The more familiar another's experience is to what we have experienced, the better able we are to imagine what it is like to feel in such a way. And it is through imagination that we feel what another is feeling in any given situation. Making the connection between our own experiences and other people's and imagining what other people are feeling helps us to relate to them in a special way. It helps us to recognize similarities between the emotional experiences of others and our own. Perceiving these similarities can help bridge the gap between "us" and "them"--a mentality detrimental to empathic understanding. Helping students to recognize similarities between the emotional experiences of themselves and others is crucial for creating an atmosphere in which empathy can be encouraged to grow. In this way, students should be encouraged to share experiences with each other. Personal stories of what it feels like to live with serious concerns often show us how those concerns make a difference in how one sees things and what one does as a result. Meaningful interaction with each other through journals or personal narrative can help students to relate to and reflect upon their own and others' perceptions, relationships and attitudes. Sharing with one another what it feels like to be in certain situations may help students to recognize similarities in feelings/experiences and foster empathic understanding. Communication with one another can also help to reveal the complexities of
human life while adding a familiar dimension to moral thought (a dimension that helps relate morality to the students, themselves, and other classmates). Educators can help stress empathic response by prompting students to think about the needs and concerns of others in the group as reflected in their discussions. Helping students to attain an empathic involvement with others permits them to see the world and the people in it with understanding and compassion.\textsuperscript{106}

Communicative interaction with other students can also help in concept development. Unless students have acquired relevant emotion concepts, they will be unable to recognize what another is feeling. Multiple uses of concepts in different situations is often required to teach them. Concepts are learned and developed through use—by having instances pointed out to us in concrete situations. By listening to others' stories and reflecting on them through group discussion, students are being exposed to important emotion concepts in context. Encouraging students to communicate with other people and pointing out concepts specific to their experiences help students to learn and recognize which sort of concept applies in different situations.

\textbf{4.3.3 Helping Students' Orientation: Directing students' attention}

Educators can also help direct students' attention through literature, history, autobiography and narrative. Students can be presented with stories which involve another's emotionally and morally significant circumstances.\textsuperscript{107} The stories can also provide insight into

\textsuperscript{106} Often, as educators, we direct students' attention to distant cultures and unfamiliar ways of life in the hope that students will gain increased understanding, respect and appreciation for those ways of living. While there is certainly nothing wrong with this approach, sometimes we forget the significance of getting students to respect and appreciate each other within our own classrooms. Sharing experiences is an attempt to alleviate the overemphasis on distant cultures by helping students also relate to those "at home."

\textsuperscript{107} One possible expansion of this notion might be to invite local authors into the classroom for "live" readings of their work followed by discussion of how it feels to be in a disadvantaged
different ways of life. Good literature draws us into living with another's pain, joy, sorrow, humiliation, embarrassment, and so on. Being drawn in can sometimes be disturbing yet has profound impact—it reconstitutes within us a new set of sensibilities about the world and those around us. Good stories, in all forms (literature, history, autobiography, narrative), can enhance students' imaginative capacities, broaden their repertoire of emotional experiences and help to sharpen and enrich their perception by helping them to learn how to recognize certain features, both emotional and moral, in a situation. Reading a variety of stories which reveal the emotional experiences of others can also help students to begin to develop a sensitivity to circumstances that produce certain kinds of emotional states in others such that the students can then recognize such circumstances.

4.3.4 Developing Compassionate Dispositions

One of the best ways for educators to reinforce and foster compassionate dispositions in students is to make them feel that they are being treated with compassion. Showing compassion position. Live presentation puts a human face to stories being told and adds a dimension of real life to issues and feelings being explored. For example, if a class was dealing with the issue of residential schooling, there are several very good pieces of work by authors local to British Columbia which sensitively deal with the issue from the Native authors' eyes. See Shirley Sterling, My Name is Seepeetza (Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre, 1992); Lee Maracle, Sojourner's Truth and Other Stories (Vancouver, B.C.: Press Gang Publishers, 1990); Bridget Moran, Stoney Creek Woman [Sai'k'uz Ts'eke]: the Story of Mary John (Vancouver, B.C.: Tillacum Library, 1988).

In an empirical study carried out by a colleague, Yeuk Yi Pang, and myself, narrative was used in the forms of short stories, autobiography and film to enhance students' abilities to role exchange. One very interesting outcome of this study which has direct bearing on this discussion of "good stories" is that the students in the study noticeably responded more toward the short stories and the film. The autobiography was virtually useless. It seems that more research needs to be carried out with regard to specific criteria for literature/narrative to be used in a program aimed at cultivating empathic understanding in students.
fosters compassion. In this way, educators must exemplify respect by treating the thoughts and feelings of their students with respect. They must also demand that their students build a community where each child has as much responsibility as any other to be sensitive to and care about the feelings, needs and concerns of others. Educators should help students to regard each person as just as valuable as every other (regarding each other's differences as special and not unintelligible) by stressing the common humanity of all people. They can teach students to value diversity and recognize it as something that can enrich one's life as opposed to threatening it. Further, students should be encouraged to listen to other people's points of view and take those points of view seriously. By listening to one another and taking others' experiences seriously, both educators and students create a trusting atmosphere which opens up the opportunity for sharing and empathic understanding. Finally, the development of empathy should be fostered in the content of a moral education program aimed at developing both care and respect for persons.
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