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Empathy and Practical Deliberation

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Laura Elizabeth Cutshaw
August 2016

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father. His wisdom and guidance demonstrated to me the significance of careful examination of reasons in deliberations and the importance of rationality in social interactions. This inspired me to pursue the study of empathy and advice-giving.

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Abstract

This thesis falls in the long discussion in philosophy and psychology on the study of empathy. The aim of the thesis is to advance our understanding of the complicated relationship between empathy and the moral life. Discussion of empathy appears within numerous contexts, such as pop culture and media, political views, clinical psychology, studies on psychopathy, moral development, bioethics and more. In most of those contexts, empathy is commonly linked to the ability to gain an understanding of other people's minds. In discussions of the moral life, empathy is usually associated with motivation for prosocial moral behavior and the development of moral judgment. The problem is that the term 'empathy' is being used to refer to different psychological components or mental states, which makes it difficult to keep track of which components or states are being referred to. Thus, I propose a new concept of empathy, *empathy as a skill*, which characterizes empathy as a complex process consisting of a specific skill set that allows one to acquire a firsthand grasp of another person's mental state in a given situation. I explain that the skills required for empathy are self-oriented perspective-shifting and other-oriented affective matching. Although conceptualizing empathy is important, the major goal of this thesis is to propose a novel role for empathy that focuses on the practical application of empathy. Thus, I argue that empathy is a skill set, not an affective response, which allows rational agents to acquire information needed for practical deliberation in certain situations, primarily those involving advice-giving on final ends or ultimate goals.

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Introduction

This thesis follows in the rich progression of philosophical and psychological work on empathy by aiming to advance our understanding of the complicated relationship between empathy and the moral life. Discussion of empathy appears within numerous contexts, such as pop culture and media, political views, clinical psychology, studies on psychopathy, moral development, bioethics and more. In most of those contexts, empathy is commonly linked to the ability to gain an understanding of other people's minds. In discussions of the moral life, empathy is usually associated with motivation for prosocial moral behavior and the development of moral judgment. The presence of empathy in such a wide range of topics indicates that it has some importance in the social life, but has also presented a steep hurdle in the study of empathy: defining exactly what empathy is. This problem arises from the fact that the term 'empathy' is being used to refer to different psychological components or mental states, which makes it difficult to keep track of which components or states are being referred to. It is important to know which psychological component is being referred to as empathy because the distinct components or mental states vary widely.

The specific concept proposed in this thesis presents a narrow conceptualization in which empathy is a complex process consisting of a specific skill set that allows one to acquire a firsthand grasp of another person's mental state in a given situation. Empathy is characterized as a complex process because it simultaneously involves affective and cognitive elements. The skills required for empathy are self-oriented perspective-shifting and other-oriented affective matching. Self-oriented perspective-shifting is typically defined as imagining what an individual *himself* would experience if he were in another person's situation. Other-oriented affective matching is an adaptation of other-oriented perspective-shifting in which, instead of imagining

being another person in that person's situation as the means of sharing that other person's mental state, one actively imagines *feeling what another person feels*. As you will see in the first chapter, this concept is similar to the narrow concepts currently in circulation in the philosophical and psychology literature on empathy (Battaly, 2011; Coplan, 2011; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993; Hoffman, 2000), but with an important difference in that empathy is a concurrence of skills instead of an affective response.

The major goal of this thesis is to propose a novel role for empathy that focuses on the practical application of empathy. As mentioned above, empathy is commonly regarded as a motivator for prosocial helping behavior or as a component of moral judgment as well as an essential element in moral development. In this thesis I argue that empathy is a skill set, not an affective response, which allows rational agents to acquire information needed for practical deliberation in certain situations, primarily those involving advice-giving on final ends or ultimate goals. On this account, empathy is relevant in the moral life in that it provides a method for identifying morally appropriate reasons for pursuing certain ends and contributes to the refinement of social interactions with others. Since empathy is a skill set that can be improved, there is a level of excellence in which empathy is exercised. With that being said, empathy as a set of skills may be considered a virtue that rational agents should strive to do well.

The strategy for the thesis is as follows. After summarizing the major conceptions of empathy, chapter one explores in detail the concept proposed in this thesis, *empathy as a skill*. I discuss the features of other-oriented affective matching and self-oriented perspective-shifting, i.e. the two skills necessary for empathy. In chapter two I discuss the traditional role of empathy in moral motivation and its influence on the sentimentalist-rationalist debate on moral judgment. The chapter begins with an examination of Shaun Nichols' construal of the sentimentalist-

rationalist debate, which looks at research on the psychological makeup of psychopaths as a way of understanding moral judgment. Nichols presents a set of arguments against moral rationalism in an attempt to show that sentimentalism can provide a viable explanation for moral judgment. I offer some preliminary responses available to the rationalist, but suggest that an explanation of moral judgment may not solely rely on exclusive terms from each side of the debate. The concept of empathy in this thesis sheds new light on this debate by offering an explanation of moral judgment in a blend of rationalist and sentimentalist terms. The final chapter focuses on the practical application of empathy, which I argue is in the advice-giving paradigm. I claim that *empathy as a skill* is needed for giving *good* advice about constitutive and final ends. I substantiate this claim by explaining empathy's role in allowing the adviser to acquire important information about the decision-maker's options and in influencing the manner by which the adviser shares this information with the decision-maker. I also provide a detailed example to illustrate the process involved with using empathy to give good advice. The thesis closes with an analysis of the moral significance of *empathy as a skill* and of giving good advice. Empathy allows agents to refine the process of practical deliberation by providing opportunities for the empathizer to practice evaluating reasons for action in an impartial manner. Lastly I suggest additional areas of research for the study of empathy and its role in the moral life.

Chapter 1: Understanding empathy

1.1 Introduction

In Karsten Stueber's historical account of empathy he outlines the early definitions of empathy offered by scholars in the 1900's, beginning with Edward Titchener (2014). Titchener, a British psychologist, coined the term 'empathy' in 1909 as a translation of a German term for the phrase "feeling into" (as cited in Stueber, 2014). Titchener's usage of the term is primarily in the context of aesthetic appreciation of nature and art, such that a person can "feel into" the primitive essence of nature. The German philosopher Theodor Lipps took the definition one step further and claimed that "it has also to be understood as being the primary basis for recognizing each other as minded creatures" (as cited in Stueber, 2014). Following Lipps' conception of empathy, so-called "theory theorists" portrayed empathy as an "attribution of mental states to other people as theoretical inference" and held empathy as the "primary epistemic means of understanding other minds" (as cited in Stueber, 2014). Evidently, the extensive research on empathy, traced back to Titchener, has produced an array of competing concepts. Fortunately, a helpful schematic of the dominant concepts in the contemporary literature is provided in an article by Heather Battaly (2011).

According to Battaly's schematic, there are four major concepts of empathy, one of which she characterizes as pre-theoretical and the other three as theoretical. Each concept employs at least one of three psychological components: sharing affective or mental states, simulating mental states and caring for other people. The pre-theoretical concept of empathy consists of an empathizer who cares about the target, shares the target's affective or mental states and makes predictions about the target's mental states as well as behavior (Battaly, 2011). However, there is a vagueness about the concurrence of the three psychological components in

the pre-theoretical concept that has prompted philosophers and psychologists to develop more precise concepts, hence the three theoretical concepts.

The first theoretical concept Battaly discusses, *empathy as sharing by multiple means*, stipulates “one empathizes with the target if and only if one has roughly the same mental state as the target” (2011). On this account, empathy is conceptualized as an automatic, effortless and involuntary process that does not require knowledge about the other person’s mental state. Instances of empathy on this concept are emotional contagion, mimicry and low-level simulation. Several studies have shown that people’s affective states are oftentimes influenced by the facial expressions and speech patterns they imitate from others (Adelman & Zajonc, 1989; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993). The second theoretical concept, *empathy as sharing and knowing/mindreading*, defines empathy as a cognitive process in which the empathizer not only shares the target’s affective or mental state, but also recognizes that the source of the shared mental state is the target (Battaly, 2011). According to this conception, perspective-shifting and high-level simulation are examples of empathy because they involve the combination of sharing the other’s mental state and the cognitively controlled attribution of that mental state to the target. This concept differs from the previous one in that the involvement of perspective-shifting keeps the empathizer’s focus on the target whereas lower-level processes, such as emotional contagion, tend to cause the empathizer to lose focus on the target and concentrate on his own affective state (Coplan, 2011; Goldie, 2011). The third theoretical concept Battaly describes, *empathy as knowing/mindreading by multiple means*, focuses solely on the higher-order cognitive components involved in gaining knowledge about other people’s mental states by making inferences about the other person (2011). On this concept, empathy does not require the sharing of the affective state of the other person. It is plain to see that a consensus is needed on

exactly what empathy is. Not only are these concepts not the same as one another, they are not concepts of the same phenomenon. A temporary solution to this dissonance is to first acknowledge the various concepts of empathy, as I have just done, and then designate a specific concept for the discussion, which is the focus of the next section.

1.2 Narrow concepts

In an attempt to reduce conceptual confusion, this thesis works with a narrow concept of empathy that is restricted to the cognitively demanding, higher-order components as described in Battaly's second theoretical concept discussed above. Amy Coplan's definition of empathy is an example of the second theoretical concept, which claims that "empathy is a complex imaginative process in which an observer simulates another person's situated psychological states while maintaining clear self-other differentiation" (2011). Another example is Peter Goldie's "empathetic perspective-shifting" in which a person intentionally shifts his perspective to that of another person "in order to imagine being the other person, and thereby sharing in his or her thoughts, feelings, and other aspects of their psychology" (2011). In the same vein as the concepts stipulated by Coplan and Goldie, the kind of empathy in this thesis is a higher-level cognitive process that consists of affective as well as cognitive components. In Coplan's and Goldie's concepts, the affective component of empathy is the matching of the affective states between the empathizer and the target. The cognitive component in both of those concepts is the mental exercise of shifting one's perspective to that of another person. Since the cognitive component is lacking in Battaly's first theoretical concept, the involuntary and lower-level processes described in *empathy as sharing by multiple means* are not the primary topic of discussion here. Due to the omission of the affective component, Battaly's third theoretical

concept, *empathy as knowing/mindreading by multiple means*, is also not part of the primary discussion in this thesis.

A new theoretical concept of empathy similar to the concept *empathy as sharing and knowing/mindreading* is the topic of this thesis. Thus, I submit *empathy as a skill* as the new theoretical concept of empathy that we should consider. This concept defines empathy as a complex process consisting of a specific skill set that allows one to acquire a firsthand grasp of another person's mental state in a given situation. The concept in this thesis differs from the others in the category described above in that the matching of affective states between the empathizer and target is a voluntary activity as opposed to an involuntary outcome of perspective-shifting. Additionally, empathy on this concept requires self-oriented perspective-shifting, which is often passed over for the more cognitively demanding other-oriented perspective-shifting. The next couple of sections analyze the essential features of *empathy as a skill*, beginning with the affective component.

1.3 Other-oriented affective matching

The term 'affect' refers to a wide range of mental states which all seem to have a characteristic feeling and some are accompanied by physiological stimulation. The most common mental states that fall into the broad category of affect are mood and emotion. Brute emotions, such as fear, sadness, and anger, are the typical mental states that refer to affect in the *empathy as sharing by multiple means* and *empathy as sharing and knowing/mindreading* theoretical concepts. The difference in the affective components between those two concepts of empathy is the addition of a representational quality to the emotion. The former concept, *empathy as sharing by multiple means*, stipulates that the empathizer experiences a brute

emotion in response to the target's affective state. On this concept, the empathizer may simply "catch" the target's emotion. For instance, the empathizer observes the target's affective state of sadness, and as a result, the empathizer becomes sad. On the other hand, the *empathy as sharing and knowing/mindreading* concept construes the empathizer's affective state as a representation of the target's affective state. In the former concept, the empathizer's emotion is a reaction to the target's affective state; whereas, in the latter concept, the empathizer's emotion is a representation of the target's affective response to the distressful stimulus of the target's situation. In other words, the empathizer in the first concept is sad because the target is sad, and the empathizer in the second concept is experiencing the type of sadness the target is experiencing because of the distressful situation. It seems the purpose of adding the representational quality to the affective component is to establish affective matching as a key feature of empathy.

Although the affective component of empathy typically refers to the shared experience of an affective state by the empathizer and target, researchers have proposed different degrees of similarity between the shared affective states. Some researchers propose lenient requirements for this emotional component, such as "affective congruence" which requires an approximate similarity of the shared affective states and "reactive affect" which requires the empathizer to merely have an affective reaction to the target's affective state that need not match the target's affect (Hoffman, 2000). Coplan, among other researchers, propose more stringent requirements in that the empathizer's affective state must be identical to the target's affect, referred to as affective matching (2011). The common feature among all of these characterizations of the affective component is that the empathizer's affective state is regarded as a reflexive, automatic outcome of observing the target's affective state.

In Coplan's strict definition, affective matching is the outcome produced by other-oriented perspective-shifting. However, I find that there is some confusion about what phenomenon the phrase 'affective matching' refers to. It seems more accurate to represent the empathizer's reflexive affective state, as described above, with the phrase "affective equivalency" since the measurement of the similarity between the shared affective states is a core element in those concepts of empathy. The reason for this distinction is that the involuntary, lower-level processes discussed in the previous section can fulfill the requirements for affective equivalency; so, it renders the affective component of empathy to a status of an involuntary, automatic emotional response. If the affective component of empathy requires the empathizer to experience an involuntary affective state that matches the target's, then emotional contagion or mimicry can fulfill this requirement because both of those processes produce an automatic, involuntary affective state that matches the target's affective state. With that being said, I propose that affective matching is a process, not an outcome, and more than that, it should be defined as a voluntary process in which the empathizer *intentionally* attempts to match his affective state to the affective state of the target. The notion that the empathizer intentionally tries to match the target's affective state constitutes this process as other-oriented, i.e. focused on how the target is feeling. I will henceforth refer to the affective component of empathy as other-oriented affective matching. It is important to note that affective matching on this account is not an activity in which the empathizer wills himself to feel the same affective state as the target; this would be an absurd notion. Rather, the empathizer imagines that the target's situation is something that would arouse the type of affective state that the target is experiencing with the goal of arousing the same affective state within the empathizer. It is important to treat affective matching as a skill, not an involuntary process, because it is a deliberate attempt to understand

the target's affective state which is key to acquiring a firsthand grasp of the target's situation.

Without this understanding, the empathizer is less likely to discover what it will take to alleviate the target's distress.

Although it is a voluntary process, there are certain lower-level capacities that are fundamental to other-oriented affective matching. First, the empathizer must be able to recognize the type of affective state the target is experiencing. The discernment of the target's facial expressions and body language are cues indicating the type of affective state he may be experiencing. Automatic mirroring, emotional contagion, direct association and classical conditioning are a few of the lower-level capacities that facilitate this discernment (Hoffman, 2000). In addition to recognizing the affective state, the empathizer must also be motivated to intentionally match the target's affective state. The motivation is brought on by feelings of sympathy that the empathizer has for the target or by the empathizer's concern for the target's well-being. The inclusion of this feature in the affective component is important because it is the feature that is absent in the individuals deemed unable to empathize: psychopaths and sociopaths. Since psychopaths and sociopaths do not experience emotional contagion, sympathy for others, or direct association with others, any mimicry of affective states they produce are done so for personal gain and the affective matching is not genuine (Blair, 1995; Stout, 2005). Although sociopaths and psychopaths may be able to perform some version of mimicry, possibly through classical conditioning, the deficit of a genuine motivation to match the target's affective state illustrates that the lower-level capacities are necessary but not sufficient for other-oriented affective matching.

1.4 Perspective-shifting

We've talked about the affective component of empathy, now let's turn to the cognitive component. The cognitive component of empathy most often refers to the mental abilities of perspective-shifting and self-other differentiation. Narrow concepts, such as Coplan's and Goldie's, stipulate that empathy requires other-oriented perspective-shifting. If you recall from the introduction of the thesis, this type of perspective-shifting is defined as imagining *being another person* in that person's situation as the means of sharing that other person's mental state. I agree that empathy requires the other-oriented feature, but as discussed in the previous section, it is a feature of the affective component, not the cognitive component. With that in mind, I suggest that the cognitive component of empathy is the self-oriented type of perspective-shifting. Others, however, have objected to including self-oriented perspective-shifting as an essential component of empathy (Coplan, 2011; Goldie, 2011; Slaby, 2014).

The process of perspective-shifting consists of two components. First, you are imaginatively reconstructing the target's situation, and secondly, you imagine how you would react or what affective state you would experience in that particular situation. The first component is typically regarded as noncontroversial because the reconstruction of the target's situation is essential to both types of perspective-shifting. The distinction between the two types of perspective-shifting is established in the second component regarding the imagined individual in the situation. In other words, other-oriented perspective-shifting consists of reconstructing the target's situation as if you are the target, and self-oriented perspective-shifting consists of reconstructing the target's situation as if you as yourself are in the situation. It is the second component in self-oriented perspective-shifting that causes controversy in its application in

empathy. Researchers question the effectiveness of an individual's ability to empathize if he is reconstructing the target's situation from his own viewpoint.

It is commonly suggested that there are many problems with self-oriented perspective-shifting as an explanation for why empathy focuses on other-oriented perspective-shifting (Coplan, 2011; Goldie, 2011; Hoffman, 2000).¹ The trouble is that self-oriented perspective-shifting may lead the empathizer to lose focus on the target causing the empathizer to no longer be responsive to the target, and thus is intuitively a failure to empathize. Researchers have attributed several phenomena to the loss of focus on the target, such as egocentric bias, personal distress, false consensus effects, and more (Coplan, 2011; Goldie, 2011; Hoffman, 2000). Egocentric bias refers to a psychological tendency to make the assumption that there is a great deal of likeness between oneself and others than what actually exists (Coplan, 2011). As a result of the egocentric bias, people incur false consensus effects by believing that others will think and feel the same way they think and feel (Coplan, 2011). If the empathizer exercises self-oriented perspective-shifting, he is susceptible to egocentric bias and is liable to project his own affective state onto the target, thus failing to genuinely empathize with the target. Personal distress, also known as emotional distress, refers to the psychological phenomenon of becoming distressed from witnessing another person in distress (Coplan, 2011; Hoffman, 2000). Hence, the person who observes the other becomes solely focused on alleviating his own distress as opposed to directing his attention to the other person in distress (Coplan, 2011; Hoffman, 2000). Through self-oriented perspective-shifting, the observer imagines how he would react if he were in the target's situation. If the observer experiences personal distress as a result of this shift in

¹ Hoffman and Coplan do mention that self-oriented perspective-shifting may play a part in empathy if it was exercised in conjunction with other-oriented perspective-shifting (2000; 2011).

perspective, he is more likely to completely disregard the target and fail to perform genuine empathy.

I disagree with the stipulation that empathy should, in most cases, only employ other-oriented perspective-shifting for two reasons: one, the concept of other-oriented perspective-shifting is too robust, and two, self-oriented perspective-shifting is a necessary part of empathy. There are three reasons for the claim that other-oriented perspective-shifting is too robust for the cognitive component of empathy. As with self-oriented perspective-shifting, there is a particular bias associated with other-oriented perspective-shifting that interferes with genuine empathy, referred to as the familiarity bias. Similar to the egocentric bias discussed above, a familiarity bias refers to the psychological tendency to be more receptive to individuals that we identify as similar to ourselves and more amicable towards the individuals that we know well (Coplan, 2011; Goldie, 2011). Since other-oriented perspective-shifting requires the empathizer to imagine being the target, it seems the empathizer must possess some intimate knowledge about the target. The problem this bias creates for empathy is that it restricts its scope so that it may be difficult for an empathizer to engage in other-oriented perspective-shifting with an unfamiliar or dissimilar individual. Regardless of the familiarity bias, other-oriented perspective-shifting is over-demanding on the empathizer's cognitive abilities. This type of perspective-shifting requires psychological mechanisms that are not easily accessible, such as the mental flexibility to hold back one's own perspective while also monitoring and regulating one's affective state (Goldman, 2006). Oftentimes, individuals have difficulty with or are unable to isolate their beliefs and values from those of others, causing them to view situations within the context of their personal belief systems; this phenomenon is referred to as belief preservation (Goldman, 2006, 2011). As part of imagining being another person in their situation, other-oriented

perspective-shifting inherently involves the suppression of the empathizer's beliefs in order to simulate those of the target. Since people have a natural tendency to preserve their own beliefs, other-oriented perspective-shifting is an unachievable cognitive activity for most people, thereby rendering genuine empathy as out of reach. Even if we were able to exercise such psychological mechanisms, other-oriented perspective-shifting creates a problem regarding the preservation of the target's autonomous agency. According to Goldie, other-oriented perspective-shifting is successful if the empathizer emulates the personality traits of the target in addition to the simulation of the target's perception of the situation (2011). Goldie refers to this as operating under a "full-blooded notion of agency" (2011). The problem is that the empathizer is treating the target's personality traits as empirical data used for orienting his perspective to that of the target, and the target's personality traits establish a personal stance towards his full-blooded notion of agency. Goldie argues that by imitating another's personality traits, other-oriented perspective-shifting leads the empathizer to usurp the target's agency (2011).

In light of these deep issues with other-oriented perspective-shifting, I suggest that self-oriented perspective-shifting is better suited to serve as the cognitive component of empathy. At the very minimum, self-oriented perspective-shifting is necessary for initiating the process of empathy by orienting oneself with the target's situation, i.e. figuratively setting the stage. The empathizer's focus is on the context and details of the target's situation, including the identification of the conventional norms and/or moral norms that are involved. The significance of the self-orientation of this perspective-shifting is that the empathizer's inquiry into how he would feel in that situation brings to light the degree to which certain details of the situation affected him. This is important for two reasons. First, it may alert the empathizer to previously unnoticed features of the situation that are relevant to the alleviation of the target's distress.

Second, it provides a platform for the empathizer to compare his own affective state with the target's affective state, which provides the empathizer with two pieces of information. The empathizer is able to judge the appropriateness of the target's reaction to the situation, and it gives the empathizer a "baseline" affective state to work from. The key to preventing any aversive reactions due to self-oriented perspective-shifting is for the empathizer to maintain a precise sense of self-other differentiation. The empathizer must recognize that the empathizer's affective response is his own and is not shared by the target, as well as recognizing that the target's affective state belongs to the target. With that in mind, the use of self-oriented perspective-shifting allows the empathizer to first, acquire the details of the target's situation, and then make predictions about the different actions he finds appropriate for the situation. Such predictions about the possible actions to take provide information about the available options and the reasons for choosing one option over the others. As you will see in chapter three, the acquisition of this information makes empathy's role important in the advice-giving paradigm.

1.5 Empathy as a skill

The main thrust of this new concept of empathy is that it is a skill that can be acquired and developed. A skill is characterized as a voluntary ability which we exercise some control over its obtainment and improvement through practice. As discussed in the previous sections, the affective component and cognitive component of empathy are both voluntary abilities. Both require a highly developed imagination. Self-oriented perspective-shifting requires the empathizer's imaginative reconstruction of a situation that he has witnessed another person experiencing. In other words, the empathizer experiences the situation indirectly by way of imagination. However, it's not enough that the empathizer be able to imagine the situation;

there must be a degree of precision in mentally recreating the situation given the sensitivity of the context and distressful stimulus involved in the target's direct experience of the situation. Basic imagination does not necessarily consist of such precision, rather it must be refined through practice. It requires an acute attention to the contextual circumstances in a variety of situations, which is achieved through life experiences in conjunction with some of the lower-level processes discussed earlier, such as direct association. Furthermore, the representational quality of the affective state in other-oriented affective matching relies on the ability to imagine the characteristic feeling of the affective state. This type of imagination not only requires the empathizer's ability to experience such affective states, it also requires the empathizer to simulate the association of the distressful stimulus to a proper affective state. Once again, this voluntary ability rests on the empathizer's life experiences and a level of control over his emotions that is something akin to the exercises employed in "method acting".

Developed by the actor and director Constantin Stanislavski, method acting is a system of acting techniques on how to portray genuine human nature and behavior while on stage (Bilgrave and Deluty, 2004). One part of this system focuses on the evocation of emotions, for which there are two specific techniques Stanislavski practiced: "affective memory" and "the system of physical action" (Hughes, 1993). In the technique of affective memory, the actor recalls one of his personal experiences in a situation that resembles the circumstances of the character's experience; in doing so, the actor imaginatively recreates the emotion he personally experienced and applies that emotion to the character's situation. The other technique, the system of physical action, evokes the emotion in the actor through the actor's repetition of the physical behavior in the character's situation; in other words, "the system of physical action finds the emotion within

the action” (Hughes, 1993). In order to utilize this technique, Stanislavski stipulated the following:

“Don’t think about the feeling itself, but set your mind to work on what makes it grow, what the conditions were that brought about the experience. ...Never begin with results. They will appear in time as the logical outcome of what has gone before” (as cited in Fisher, 1964).

The process of other-oriented affective matching is similar to this second technique, the system of physical action. With this method acting technique, an emotion is evoked by performing a certain sequence of physical actions. In other-oriented affective matching the emotion is evoked by imagining the sequence of events that aroused the target’s emotional response. The empathizer, like the actor, must deepen the connection of the sequence of events with the targeted emotion by trying to mentally simulate the target’s situation as accurately as possible via self-oriented perspective-shifting. The result of this simulation is an emotional response in the empathizer. In order for the empathy to be genuine, the produced affective state in the empathizer must closely match the target’s affective state. So, the empathizer voluntarily simulates the circumstances of the target’s situation and actively tries to evoke an affective state that matches the target’s affective state by mentally “moving” through the sequence of events that led to the target’s emotion.

The voluntary nature of *empathy as a skill* sets it apart from the other concepts of empathy in that it justifies a practical application in the moral life. Although the cognitively demanding concepts of empathy involve higher-order mental processes, empathy on those accounts is still characterized as a response to the observation of an individual in distress.

1.6 Conclusion

So far we've looked at the common concepts of empathy and narrowed down our discussion to a higher-level, cognitively demanding conception of empathy, *empathy as a skill*. We identified the affective component as other-oriented affective matching and the cognitive component as self-oriented perspective-shifting. As discussed in the previous section, the essential feature of this new concept of empathy is that it is a completely voluntary process that can be cultivated and refined through practice. The significance of this feature is that it illuminates the practical application of empathy in the moral life, as will be discussed in chapter three, and it sheds new light on our understanding of the key factors that constitute sincere moral judgments. With that being said, the next chapter delves into the details of the sentimentalist-rationalist debate regarding the sincerity of moral judgment.

As a completely voluntary process, *empathy as a skill* shows us what the missing factor is in the deficiency of amoral individuals, such as psychopaths, to make sincere moral judgments. This revelation is brought forth in the sentimentalist-rationalist debate discussed in the next chapter. According to the sentimentalist side of the debate, the key factor in moral judgment is one's sensitivity to emotional responsiveness; whereas the rationalist side of the debate argues that sincere moral judgments rely on one's ability to sufficiently exercise his rational faculties. *Empathy as a skill* sheds fresh light on this debate by making things less "black and white" in explaining that what the psychopath lacks doesn't adhere to the either-or notion of "is it emotional or is it cognitive" that determines the sincerity of moral judgment. Thus, my argument is two-fold. One, a psychopathic individual can be characterized as lacking the ability to exercise the skill of empathy, as I've explained it. Two, understanding psychopathy in terms of an inability to do something helps us better understand moral judgment.

Chapter 2: The sentimentalist-rationalist debate on moral judgment

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we explored a new theoretical concept of empathy, *empathy as a skill*, as one of many ways to understand the mental states of other people. The current chapter examines the relation of empathy to moral motivation and its purported contribution to the revival of moral sentimentalism through the involvement of emotional responsiveness in moral judgment. Throughout the contemporary literature on empathy there have been several proposed characterizations of empathy's relation to moral motivation. One such proposal is that empathy is a catalyst for bringing about moral emotions that have "behavioral profiles," i.e. the anticipation of a particular emotion associated with a specific action influences an individual as whether to avoid the action or perform it (Prinz, 2011). Another idea is that there is a common desire among most people to alleviate suffering in oneself, and, by gaining a firsthand grasp of another person's suffering, empathy allows us to share in the desire to alleviate the suffering of the other person (Masto, 2015; Simmons, 2014). However, empathy is most often considered a source of moral motivation for prosocial behavior in a specific type of situation referred to as an innocent bystander encounter. In this type of situation, one person, an observer, witnesses another person, the target of the observation, in distress (Hoffman, 2000). The observer is neither the source of the target's distress nor directly affected by the stress-inducing circumstances. A simple example of an innocent bystander encounter is a person witnesses a woman stumble on an imperfection in a sidewalk as she is walking and falls down causing an injury to her ankle. The fallen woman is now visibly in a distressful state due to the physical pain of her ankle injury. The observer is an innocent bystander in this case because he neither caused the woman to stumble nor incurred any physical pain from the woman's injury. The observer may feel motivated to help alleviate the

woman's distressful state by providing some assistance in relieving the pain in her ankle. Several researchers claim that this motivation is a result of the observer empathizing with the injured woman (Coplan, 2011; Hoffman, 2000). The observer recognizes the distressful state of the woman based on his own experiences with pain and knows that he would want to alleviate the pain. Thus, he helps the woman because he has shared her affective state via empathy and reacts to her situation in a manner based on his belief that she would want to alleviate the pain from her injury. The observer's judgment to help the injured woman is based on the experience of sharing the woman's affective state in that particular situation. The key idea is that emotional responsiveness is conducive to the ability to make sincere moral judgments, which is a basic expression of moral sentimentalism, and empathy is typically regarded as playing a key role in bringing about this ability (Hoffman, 2000).

In order to make a case for moral sentimentalism, the sentimentalist must demonstrate a case in which an individual is regarded as fully rational yet inept at sincere moral judgments because he lacks the required emotional responsiveness for moral motivation. Psychological and neuroscientific research on the relation of psychopaths and empathy attempts to take up this challenge (Blair, 1995; Decety and Meltzoff, 2011; Nichols, 2002, 2004). The notion that emotions play a significant role in moral judgment along with the research on psychopathy springs a viewpoint on morality divergent from traditional rationalist views on morality. Many scholars, such as Nagel, Korsgaard, Smith and others, advocate views on moral judgment, and morality in general, which rest on connections between rationality and morality. For instance, an individual is regarded as having sincerely made a moral judgment if he exercised his rational capacities well or if he engaged in practical deliberation in situations of moral considerations, especially those which necessitate action. On a majority of the rationalist accounts, an

individual's moral judgments can only be considered sincere if his rational faculties are sufficiently developed and exercised. Nonetheless, there remains the problem of determining what constitutes as “sufficiently developed” and what types of people meet this criteria. Regardless, these two views fostered the contemporary philosophical debate between rationalist conceptions of morality and sentimentalist conceptions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this debate is roughly characterized as a dispute over which represents the key factor in explaining moral judgment: rationality or emotional responsiveness. The purpose of this chapter is to shed new light on the sentimentalist-rationalist debate by showing that *empathy as a skill* presents us with an instance of explaining moral judgment in terms of a blend between rationality and emotions.

In an exploratory spirit, I want to examine the arguments against moral rationalism put forth by Shaun Nichols and consider possible responses available to the rationalist. Nichols argues it is highly implausible that rationalism can account for moral judgment (2002). I selected Nichols' analysis because it features studies on the moral compass of psychopaths, which is helpful in trying to gain a better understanding of morality, and because he addresses two prominent claims exhibited in moral rationalism. In order for the debate to get under way, Nichols suggests that psychopaths fulfill the characterization of fully rational amoral agents (2002, 2004). Nichols argues that the psychopath's lack of motivation to follow through with her moral judgments and her inability to distinguish moral from conventional violations provides evidence that an amoralist can be rational. From this evidence, Nichols draws the conclusion that the psychopath's defective moral judgment is not the result of a deficit in rationality or reasoning, and this conclusion poses a real threat to rationalist conceptions, broadly construed, of moral judgment (2002).

The strategy for the chapter is as follows. I begin with an overview of the traditional characterizations of psychopathic individuals and the types of empathy that are discussed in the psychological research. Then the next two sections frame the sentimentalist-rationalist debate in two “big picture” aspects: (i) considerations of two assumed constituents of moral judgment and (ii) considerations of two broadly construed rationalist theses. Moral motivation and norm-type distinction refer to the two assumed constituents of moral judgment. The broad rationalist theses under review are *conceptual rationalism* and *empirical rationalism*, as described by Nichols (2004). One section discusses the connection between moral motivation and the conceptual rationalist thesis as Nichols presents it. The other section discusses the connection between norm-type distinction and the empirical rationalist thesis. In both of these sections I suggest some generic responses for the rationalist to use as preliminary replies to Nichols’ sentimentalist views on moral judgment. However, I do note that a purely rationalist view of empathy may not be a viable solution to the issues the sentimentalist raises regarding moral judgment. Finally, I explain how *empathy as a skill* provides a better explanation of the psychopath’s deficit in moral judgment and how this helps us understand moral judgment in rationalist as well as sentimentalist concepts.

2.2 The psychopath

A common method for investigating the essential features of morality is to examine the defects in allegedly immoral individuals. Studies on psychopathy have become a popular source in recent literature on the inner workings of moral judgment. In pop culture, psychopaths are believed to be violent, psychotic, and untreatable criminals (Lilienfeld and Arkowitz, 2007). However, the pop culture version of psychopathy is misleading, which causes misconceptions of

morality. Rather, psychopathy is a colloquial reference to a diagnosable mental condition known as “Antisocial Personality Disorder” (APD). The essential criteria for APD as delineated by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; *DSM-5*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) is the presence of a “pervasive pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood.” According to psychologist Martha Stout, it is estimated that one in twenty-five people are diagnosable with APD (2005). Additionally, a lack of empathy and a tendency for callousness are features associated with the diagnosis of APD (*DSM-5*, 2013). The technical definition of empathy, according to the *DSM-5*, is the “comprehension and appreciation of others’ experiences and motivations; tolerance of differing perspectives; understanding the effects of own behavior on others” (2013). In the alternative diagnostic criteria of APD empathy is defined as “lack of concern for feelings, needs, or suffering of others; lack of remorse after hurting or mistreating another” (*DSM-5*, 2013). Based on those features and the alternate definition of empathy, it seems as though the psychopath’s defective moral sense may be the result of lacking an emotional responsiveness to the distress of others. Hence, this understanding of psychopathy and empathy indicate the prominence of a sentimentalist concept of morality.

2.3 Conceptual rationalism and moral motivation

According to Nichols, conceptual rationalism claims that “it is part of our concept of morality that moral requirements are requirements of reason” (2002). Nichols argues that research on psychopaths renders conceptual rationalism as implausible on two counts: one, the absence of moral motivation in psychopaths and two, the conflict of our common concept of psychopathy with our common concept of moral judgment. Nichols evokes Michael Smith’s

account of conceptual rationalism in order to discuss the link between moral judgment and moral motivation. On Smith's account, conceptual rationalism involves the "practicality requirement" which claims it is part of our concept of moral judgment that people are motivated by moral judgments and only the "good and strong-willed person" will be necessarily motivated to adhere to her judgment if the moral judgment is a sincere one (Nichols, 2002; Rosati, 2014). However, Nichols maintains the common concept of psychopathy suggests that it is conceivable for a psychopath to make an entirely rational judgment about a morally required action without having any motivation to follow through with the action (2002, 2004). In order to determine what the common concept of psychopathy shows us about moral judgment, Nichols performed an experiment by presenting a group of undergraduate students with a pair of short descriptions of two fictional characters. One description is of a psychopathic man who claims to recognize moral violations yet has no emotional response to harming another person, i.e. a lack of empathy²; the other description is of an academic man who has no emotional response to harming someone but refrains from doing so as a result of being rational (Nichols, 2004). After reading the descriptions, the students were asked if each man actually understands the moral concepts associated with harming another person. The major consensus was that the psychopathic man does understand moral concepts of right and wrong, but lacks any concern for acting morally. From the results of his study, Nichols concludes that it seems to be a platitude that psychopaths are rational in that they can make judgments about what is morally required while feeling no motivation to abide by those judgments. Thus, if psychopaths do make moral judgments without being necessarily motivated to do what has been judged as morally required,

² Empathy as defined by the alternative definition in the DSM.

then Smith's practicality requirement does not hold and this is a problem for conceptual rationalism.

Nichols suggests that proponents of conceptual rationalism would respond to the problem of the psychopath by claiming that psychopaths are not actually making sincere moral judgments (Nichols, 2004). Rather, the psychopath's judgment of right and wrong, devoid of any moral motivation, is in an "inverted commas" sense in that the psychopath's concept of morality refers to something other than standard concepts of morality (Nichols, 2002). So, the psychopath making moral judgments in the "inverted commas" sense "must really either lack competence with moral concepts or is speaking insincerely" (Rosati, 2014). Nichols holds that if the "inverted commas" sense of moral judgment is to support conceptual rationalism in the case of psychopaths, then it has to claim that a 'moral' judgment made by a psychopath is not sincerely moral because it does not fit within a standard concept of morality (2002). To begin his rebuttal of the rationalist's inverted commas argument, Nichols points out that it is important to avoid empirical problems about the representation of concepts when dealing with conceptual analysis. One way of avoiding such empirical problems is to define concepts by the platitudes in which they occur. Nichols reminds us that conceptual rationalism is supposed to characterize our common concept of morality through a set of platitudes about our moral concepts. However, Nichols' study, discussed above, suggests that it is a platitude that psychopaths really are capable of making moral judgments. As a result, Nichols concludes that this platitude about psychopaths indicates the failure of conceptual rationalism to avoid empirical problems, and thus conceptual rationalism does not effectively depict the platitudes of moral judgment. With his rebuttal of the inverted commas sense of the psychopath's moral judgments and his study on the common concept of psychopathy, Nichols claims that it appears difficult for conceptual rationalism to

provide a plausible explanation of a connection between rationality and morality. Although Nichols presents an interesting case against conceptual rationalism, it seems as though the rationalist can yet respond to Nichols' conclusions.

2.3.1 The rationalist's response regarding moral motivation

Stueber describes moral motivation as acting on a self-less reason, instead of on self-interested desires, that can often lead to "helping behavior" (2013). According to Connie Rosati, there are two main theses about the relation of motivation to moral judgment: *motivational judgment internalism* and *motivational judgment externalism*, henceforth referred to as *internalism* and *externalism* (2014). Internalism states that a sincere moral judgment necessarily requires motivation to adhere to the judgment; externalism holds that if there is a connection between motivation and moral judgment, then it is wholly a contingent, not necessary, connection (Rosati, 2014). These two theses are divided as such because of the viewpoint each thesis advocates about the amoralist, "the person who apparently makes moral judgments, while remaining wholly unmoved to comply with them" (Rosati, 2014). Hence, the amoralist in this discussion is the psychopath.

According to Rosati, internalism can be understood in at least three versions (2014):

- (strong version)- a person will be necessarily "overridingly motivated" to adhere to his judgment if the moral judgment is to be a sincere moral judgment.
- (moderate version)- although a person will necessarily feel some sort of motivation when making a sincere moral judgment, it is possible that the motivation can be overridden.
- (weak version)- Michael Smith's "practicality requirement," which claims that only the "good and strong-willed person" will be necessarily motivated to adhere to her judgment if the moral judgment is a sincere one.

Recall that Nichols stipulates conceptual rationalism employs the practicality requirement, which claims if a person sincerely judges that an action is morally required, then she has a reason to do the action and will be necessarily motivated to adhere to the judgment. So, the 'moral requirement' feature of an action establishes the reason for doing the action as a "non-optional" reason. T. M. Scanlon's cognitivist account of reasons may help defend the conceptual rationalist position against Nichols' sentimentalist notions about the connection of moral judgment with motivation (2009). According to Scanlon, the motivational power behind non-optional reasons for morally required action consists of a universal-desire-fulfillment-endorsement and fully-informed situation awareness (2009). What I have termed as universal-desire-fulfillment-endorsement refers to Scanlon's notion that "there are some things that promote the fulfillment of desires that everyone has," and fully-informed situation awareness is the state of impartially perceiving all the contents of the situation one finds oneself in (2009). In the case of the psychopath, a deficit in moral motivation caused by the absence of the universal-desire-fulfillment-endorsement can be explained away by the sentimentalist. However, a deficiency in situation awareness indicates a flaw in the psychopath's rational faculties.

If one component of fully-informed situation awareness is the acknowledgment of one's responsibility for one's involvement, via intended and/or intentional actions, in the situation one finds oneself in, then the psychopath has a clear deficit in situation awareness. According to Stout, there are two manners in which the psychopath does not acknowledge responsibility for her involvement, via intended and/or intentional actions, within a situation (2005):

- (a) the psychopath never perceives her actions or way of living as morally wrong; or
- (b) even if the psychopath recognizes her actions or way of living is morally wrong, she does not associate the wrong actions with herself.

Nichols' experiment on the common perception of the psychopath's understanding of moral concepts discredits (a). However, (b) is based on diagnostic criteria for *APD*. According to the *DSM-5*, an indicator of *APD* is the pathological personality trait of *consistent irresponsibility*, the "disregard for and failure to honor obligations or commitments; lack of respect for and lack of follow through on agreements or promises" (2013).

In order for the psychopath to be necessarily motivated to perform an action that she has rationally judged as morally right, she must have a non-optional reason to adhere to the judgment and perform the action. For the non-optional reason to motivate the action, the psychopath must endorse the fulfillment of a universal desire and must engage in fully-informed situation awareness. A fully-informed situation awareness includes acknowledgment of one's responsibility in the situation one finds oneself in. The psychopath, by the very nature of being a psychopath, does not acknowledge responsibility for her involvement in situations in which she did not adhere to her moral judgment and performed a morally wrong action. If the psychopath lacks the capacity for fully-informed situation awareness, then a non-optional reason for adhering to her moral judgment will not motivate her to perform the morally right action. So, if we are to understand a "moral requirement" as a reason for action and that this reason is a "non-optional reason", then the psychopath lacks the understanding of what a moral requirement is because the understanding of non-optional reason requires fully-informed situation awareness. Therefore, the psychopath's moral judgment lacks the rational component of moral motivation and the psychopath is incapable of making sincere moral judgments due to a deficit in rationality. Proponents of conceptual rationalism may want to build on the responsibility aspect of situation awareness by incorporating some sort of reflective-evaluation mechanism by which a person will, upon reflection of her previous judgments in similar situations, assess the suitability of her

judgment in the current situation of moral consideration. Such a project seems like a fruitful endeavor for the rationalist camp to pursue.

To sum up this section, I delineated Nichols' argument against the conceptual rationalism through his account of moral motivation in relation to the rationalist-sentimentalist debate. Nichols' strategy was to first provide an argument from conceivability followed by responding to the rationalist's notion of the "inverted commas" sense of moral concept. He concludes that since the psychopath can rationally, as according to the common perception of the psychopath's understanding of the difference between right and wrong, make a moral judgment without motivation to follow suit with the judgment indicates that any lack in moral judgment the psychopath may have is not a lack in rationality. However, I suggested that the psychopath's deficit in moral motivation seems to arise from the psychopath's inability to rationally assess the situation under moral consideration and that this ability is a rational faculty. In short, conceptual rationalism may survive Nichols' attack by stipulating a feature of moral motivation that requires the agent to recognize reasons for action. In the next section, I assess Nichols' construal of empirical rationalism and look at the role of norm-type distinction for the rationalist-sentimentalist debate on moral judgment.

2.4 Empirical rationalism and norm-type distinction

The second of the two assumed constituents of moral judgment is the capability to distinguish *moral norms* from *conventional norms*, which I henceforth refer to as the norm-type distinction ability. Generally speaking, the distinction is made when the moral norms are "somehow regarded to be universally valid, independent from the commands of social authority

and a particular culture" (Stueber, 2014). Nichols characterizes the difference between the two types of norms as follows (2002):

- moral norm- guides behavior in terms of providing fairness in interpersonal relations as well as condemning harmfulness to others; violations of moral norms are considered to be more severe than violations of conventional norms; standard examples include physical violence, deceitfulness (lying), cheating, stealing, etc.
- conventional norm- guides behavior in terms of "social acceptability" and relies on localized authority for enforcement; standard examples include school rules, rules of etiquette, cultural customs, parental demands, etc.

Rationalist views on the norm-type distinction ability have the features of the empirical rationalism thesis, which states, per Nichols, "it is an empirical fact that moral judgment in humans is a kind of rational judgment; that is, our moral judgments derive from our rational faculties or capacities" (2004). On the other hand, sentimentalist views, broadly construed, assume that the capability for norm-type distinction derives from a primitive feeling or an intuition relative to the degree of approbation for the actions under moral consideration. The feeling or intuition is often identified as an instance of empathy as the type of empathy described in Battaly's first and second theoretical concepts described in chapter one.

Nichols' project aims to show that if emotional responsiveness is responsible for the norm-type distinction ability, then it, as opposed to rational faculties, is the principal constituent of moral judgment. The idea is that certain verbal and non-verbal cues, such as "distress cues," stimulate an emotional response. It is commonly suggested that the mechanism responsible for the stimulation process between the cues and the emotional response is empathy. The emotional response generated by empathy "seems to infuse norms with a special status" based on the available information about "harm-based normative violations" (Nichols, 2002). This "special status" refers to the experience of an affective state of anxiety relative to the severity of violating the norm (similar to a reflex), such that severe violations indicate a moral norm. Once the

emotional response infuses the special status to a norm violation, the norm-type distinction is made and leads to a sincere moral judgment. The basic line of Nichols' argument is that if a defect in the ability to distinguish norm-types is not the result of a defect in rational faculties, then moral judgment does not solely derive from rational capacities. To support his argument, Nichols refers to R. James Blair's research on the norm-type distinction ability in children, autistic children and psychopathic compared to non-psychopathic criminals.

A key factor in the norm-type distinction is an adequate understanding of moral violations, since the severity of violating a moral norm impacts the infusion of the special status to moral norms. Blair's research investigated the manner in which psychopaths and non-psychopaths distinguished moral norms from conventional norms as well as the type of justifications provided for each distinction (1995). The results of Blair's investigation appear to demonstrate a defect in the psychopath's understanding of moral violations, which indicates an inability to distinguish moral norms from conventional norms (1995). Both psychopathic and non-psychopathic incarcerated criminals were asked questions about the permissibility and seriousness of various norm violations, as well as the authoritative force of the norm. Blair's test produced three major results (1995):

1. The non-psychopathic criminals were able to distinguish moral norms from conventional norms, whereas the psychopathic criminals were not able to.
2. The psychopaths regarded the violations of conventional norms the same as those of moral norms by implying that "all transgressions are authority independent."
3. The psychopaths were much less likely to judge the norm violations in terms of the victim's welfare.

The first two results of Blair's study could be indications of the psychopath's reference to morality in the inverted-commas sense, which would render the psychopath's moral judgments as insincere on the basis of conceptual rationalism. However, according to Nichols' account, Blair's

third result presents a challenge to empirical rationalism because the result demonstrates a defect in the stimulation of an emotional response from verbal/non-verbal cues, i.e. a lack of empathy. Without empathy, the psychopath does not consider how any act of norm violation will affect another person thus failing to infuse a special status to the severity of harm-based violations and inhibiting the norm-type distinction ability. Therefore, Nichols maintains that this inhibition of the norm-type distinction engenders a deficiency in moral judgment based on defective emotional responsiveness (2002, 2004).

In addition to advancing a sentimentalist view about moral judgment, Nichols' account aims to raise a particular skepticism about empirical rationalism. He frames the skepticism in two kinds of worries for an empirical rationalist account (2002): (i) degree of difficulty and (ii) insufficiency of evidence. The degree of difficulty approach stipulates that the plausibility of the empirical rationalism thesis depends on a substantial exposition of the rational faculties that govern the norm-type distinction ability followed by confirmation that the psychopath lacks these particular rational faculties. Furthermore, the rationalist's account must provide a demonstration of the absence of such a defect in the rational faculties of non-psychopathic people. Nichols considers these tasks as notably difficult for the empirical rationalist since the range of the mental abilities and disabilities of the people who can make the norm-type distinction is quite extensive (2002).

The insufficiency of evidence worry refers to the difficulty in finding any empirical evidence for a defect in rational faculties that inhibits the norm-type distinction ability as compared to the availability of evidence for a defect in emotional responsiveness. Nichols states that "there are affective deficit accounts that are supported by independent evidence," and goes on to claim that "if one of these accounts is shown to be right, then Empirical Rationalism will

have been refuted" (2002). In short, Nichols is proposing that we should doubt the empirical rationalist account of the norm-type distinction ability because the development of such an account is unlikely since it is such an arduous task to remedy the shortage of empirical evidence to provide support for the rationalist account. But Nichols and other sentimentalists who may follow in his suit seem to underestimate the resources available for empirical rationalists to respond with.

2.4.1 Rational faculties

In order to defend the empirical rationalism thesis against Nichols' two arguments presented above, the rationalists needs to dispel the skepticism by consulting psychological research on judgment procedures in non-psychopathic people as well as provide an account of how the norm-type distinction ability derives from rational faculties. If the rationalist account is correct, then it seems plausible that the principal constituent of moral judgment is a rational faculty or a set of rational faculties. Before continuing with the rationalist approach there is an ambiguity that must be addressed. The staple item in empirical rationalism is the *rational faculty*, but what is meant by 'rational faculty'? As I understand Nichols' characterization, a rational faculty refers to the cognitive capacity to reason or engage in reasoning (2002). A rational faculty is not to be confused with a cognitive capacity. A cognitive capacity refers to mere mental activity, which includes emotions, feelings, desires, etc. Reasoning is one type of mental activity within our cognitive capacity, but reasoning can take various forms, for instance logic is a form of reasoning. With that being said, a proposed rationalist account needs to specify the form of reasoning that denotes the particular rationale responsible for the norm-type distinction

ability. Henceforth, the phrase 'rational faculty' refers to the distinct form of reasoning specified in the proposed rationalist account accompanied by a characterization of the rational faculty.

Following Nichols' method, the main line of argument on the rationalist account is that if a defect in the ability to distinguish norm-types is the result of a defect in rational faculties, then moral judgment depends on fully functioning rational faculties. The basic idea is that certain verbal and non-verbal cues, such as "distress cues," stimulate a physiological reaction in the brain, perhaps something similar to the "fight or flight" response (or acute stress response) with the exception that the choices in this case would be "cause harm or prevent harm or remain neutral." The physiological reaction is translated into information about a distinction between the norm types. The translator is a rational faculty or a set of rational faculties. Since a sufficient understanding of moral violations is necessary for the norm-type distinction, the following question comes to mind: How does the rational faculty, through the process described above, inform an individual about the severity of violating norms? Contrary to Nichols' skepticism, it seems feasible for the rationalist to answer such a question, one such approach is presented below. However, since there is insufficient empirical research on the deficit of rational faculties in norm-type distinction abilities, only speculation will be offered about how such a defect is present in psychopaths. Perhaps this speculation will encourage further research that may produce some evidence in support of the empirical rationalism thesis.

2.4.2 "Mirror neuron" approach

The phrase "mirror neurons" refers to a "significant overlap between neural areas of excitation that underlie our observation of another person's action and areas that are stimulated when we execute the very same action" as well as "our recognition of another person's emotion

based on his facial expression and our experiencing the emotion" (Stueber, 2014). The basic structure of the mirror neuron approach as a rationalist account for the norm-type distinction may be construed as the following:

1. Observation of another person's actions, facial expressions, or body language [verbal/non-verbal cues] stimulate the firing of the neurons in the observer's brain that correspond to the observer's past experience(s) of the same action or emotion [physiological reaction].
2. The observer's *association* [rational faculty] of his own experience to the situation under consideration informs him of the "goal-directedness" of his behavior toward the other person.
3. The goal-directedness of the behavior falls into one of these categories: cause harm, prevent harm, or remain neutral by doing nothing. This information provides the observer with a sense of the severity of violating the norm that the behavior is subject to.

If we assume that the physiological structure of the psychopath's brain is not significantly different from a non-psychopathic person's brain, then a defect in the norm-type distinction ability is the rational faculty of association. If the psychopath cannot associate his own experience to a situation of moral consideration, then he has no means of assessing the purpose of not violating moral norms regarding the welfare of the other person.

There is a source available for the rationalist to demonstrate the defect of the association faculty in the psychopath's norm-type distinction ability. The rationalist can consult the diagnostic criteria for *APD* in the *DSM-5*. According to the *DSM-5*, a person diagnosed with *APD*³, i.e. the psychopath, has a dysfunctional "self-direction" personality trait such that his "goal-setting is based on personal gratification, with an absence of prosocial internal standards associated with failure to conform to lawful or culturally normative ethical behavior" (2013). In other words, the psychopath directs his goals to his personal gains with no regard for the well-

³ As a reminder, *APD* is the acronym for antisocial personality disorder.

being of other people. If the psychopath's goal directedness is distorted as a result of the dysfunctional "self-direction" trait, then he would associate the other person's behavior to that of his own instead of associating his experience to that of the other person. By associating the other person's behavior to his own experience, the psychopath associates the other person as a contribution to his own personal gain. The psychopath's sense of association does not consist of any degree of comparison between himself and the other person such that he would be informed of the range of severity different norm violations can be. Without this information, the psychopath does not perceive a distinction between the violations of conventional norms versus moral norms. Therefore, the psychopath's impaired goal directedness distorts his rational faculty of association, which leads to his inability to distinguish norm-types. However, the scope of the mirror neuron approach as an advancement of a rationalist account seems restricted by the staunch physiological constitution of the approach. The takeaway is that if an inelegant approach such as the mirror neuron approach can provide a tenable method for linking the norm-type distinction ability to a rational faculty, then a more sophisticated approach can strengthen the empirical rationalism thesis.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to dispute Nichols' threat against moral rationalism, especially with regard to moral judgment. Contra conceptual rationalism, Nichols draws on common perceptions of psychopaths to reach the conclusion that psychopaths lack the proper motivation to adhere to their moral judgments, which indicates a deficit in the psychopath's emotional responsiveness. However, if proper motivation requires accuracy in assessing the situation under moral consideration and the accuracy of this assessment relies on a rational faculty, then the

psychopath's lack of moral motivation is the result of a deficit of a rational faculty. Contra empirical rationalism, Nichols stipulates a connection of a special emotional response to the ability to distinguish moral norms from conventional norms. By using Blair's research on psychopathic criminals, Nichols draws the conclusion that since psychopaths are incapable of making the norm-type distinction psychopaths lack the proper emotional responsiveness for making sincere moral judgments. Although there may not be research to show a connection between rationality and the norm-type distinction ability, the lack of this research does not entail the implausibility of a connection between rational faculties and the norm-type distinction ability. The criteria for diagnosing a psychopath seems to suggest defects in the person's rational faculties that contribute to motivation and norm-type distinctions. So, on the face of it, Nichols' proposed threat to rationalism appears innocuous.

Chapter 3: The practical application of empathy

3.1 Introduction

Although the discussion of empathy in the context of moral motivation is important, as we discussed in the previous chapter, it is not the context in which empathy is most useful. Rather, we need to look at advice-giving as the prime paradigm for the practical application of empathy. On my account, the target purposely involves the empathizer in the target's situation by actively seeking the empathizer's assistance with a decision the target is faced with, thereby identifying the empathizer as an adviser rather than a bystander motivated into action. The target is the one who is engaged in practical deliberation on an action that needs to be performed or an end to pursue; the adviser exercises empathy in order to assist the target with examining the options from which the target makes a selection.⁴ In fact, we commend therapists and counselors for exercising empathy when working with a patient. The counselor acts as a guide for the patient in mutually deciding what sort of treatment best suits the patient, but it is the patient who must carry out the necessary actions in order to alleviate his distressful state. Thus, the goal of this chapter is to highlight the role of empathy in the advice-giving paradigm by arguing that *empathy as a skill* is needed for giving good advice in practical deliberations about constitutive and final ends. One advantage of *empathy as a skill* is that since it consists of skills acquired through experience and practice, any person, not only professional therapists, who can exercise those skills is capable of accessing information about the affective states of other people.

Practical deliberation is generally defined as “the general human capacity for resolving, through reflection, the question of what one is to do” (Wallace, 2014). The phrase “what one is

⁴ It is worth noting that an adviser may be considered an agent of a certain kind, the point here is that the empathizer is not the one who must actually follow through on the decision and does not bear the immediate consequences of the decision.

to do” often leads us to associate practical deliberation with deciding on an action to perform, but practical deliberation is also applicable to decisions regarding significant life changes, such as whether to pursue a graduate school education. Practical deliberation in both circumstances involves the identification of the possible options and an analysis of what reasons there are for choosing one option over the others. So, one can deliberate on instrumental means to an end, i.e. the action(s) that will bring about a desired goal or outcome, and one can deliberate on constitutive or final ends, i.e. the ultimate goal toward which certain actions are aimed. This chapter is concerned with the latter type of deliberation in that *empathy as a skill* should be regarded as a key component in giving advice on which ends to pursue. It is not necessary for an adviser to empathize with the decision-maker when the deliberation is about the instrumental means to an end. An adviser is able to make recommendations on what actions will bring about the decision-maker’s desired goal without having to acquire a firsthand grasp on the details of the decision-maker’s situation because information on the connections between certain actions and certain outcomes can typically be acquired through impersonal, commonplace sources. Since deliberations on final ends are concerned with significant life changes, the options are relative to the decision-maker’s specific circumstances, which indicates that information on the options must be acquired through more particular methods. *Empathy as a skill* is one such method. Empathy allows the adviser to acquire a firsthand grasp on the details of the decision-maker’s circumstances and assess, from a varied viewpoint, the degrees to which each option may affect the decision-maker’s life.

In the context of advice-giving, *empathy as a skill* works in a twofold process by providing the adviser with information regarding the available options and influencing the manner by which the adviser shares this information with the decision-maker. First, by

exercising self-oriented perspective-shifting the adviser familiarizes himself with the details of the decision-maker's quandary as the decision-maker has presented it. These details include, but are not limited to, the decision-maker's construal of the available options, the conditions on each option, and the cause of the decision-maker's struggle with reaching a decision. Additionally, the adviser's shift in perspective facilitates the adviser's consideration of all the options, including options that the decision-maker may not have noticed. Next, by engaging in other-oriented affective matching the adviser attains a sense of the strength of the affective state the decision-maker is experiencing due to the importance of this deliberation. The intensity of this affective state informs the adviser of the significance of the situation to the decision-maker, which allows the adviser to assess the appropriate degree of sensitivity in giving advice to the decision-maker. By internalizing the affective state, the adviser can make predictions about how the decision-maker might respond to the adviser's advice and, from the strengths of the predicted emotions, determine what information to communicate to the decision-maker as well as the most helpful manner by which to share the information.

In the sections below, I intend to give an account of the type of advice in which empathy is most helpful and discuss the moral significance of this role of empathy. I begin with an overview of four types of advice established by researchers R. S. Dalal and S. Bonaccio followed by two characterizations of the manner by which the advice is delivered. I suggest that one type of advice is more suitable than the other three types of advice for giving advice on final ends. Next, I argue that *empathy as a skill* is needed for giving good advice on final ends by suggesting that *empathy as a skill* assists in the attainment of information that aids the decision-maker in his practical deliberation by contributing to the decision-maker's fully-informed situation awareness of the available options.

3.2 Advice-giving

According to researchers Dalal and Bonaccio, there are four distinct types of advice, of which I will characterize two as personal recommendation and the other two as externalized reporting (2010). The first type of advice, referred to as “Recommend For,” is what we typically regard as advice and is commonly defined as a recommendation or an opinion concerning what action or choice to take (Dalal and Bonaccio, 2010). The second type is referred to as “Recommend Against” in that it is a recommendation against a specific option or action (Dalal and Bonaccio, 2010). Since both types of advice are rooted in the adviser’s endorsement of a particular option or action, the advice is given in the form of a personal recommendation.

Dalal and Bonaccio’s third type of advice, referred to as “Information,” is the presentation of information about one or more of the options available to the decision-maker (2010). In this type of advice, the adviser does not provide a specific recommendation on which option to take or avoid. The fourth type of advice, “Decision Support,” is the assistance with what strategy of decision-making will be most helpful to the decision-maker (Dalal and Bonaccio, 2010). So, the adviser’s focus is on helping the person decide on how to decide as opposed to making a recommendation concerning the options. Since these two types of advice do not involve the adviser’s endorsement of a particular option or choice, the advice is given in the form of externalized reporting. However, I hesitate to wholly characterize “Decision Support” as externalized reporting since it may involve the adviser’s endorsement of a particular decision-making strategy.

The use of empathy in advice-giving is more appropriate in externalized reporting, specifically the “Information” type of advice, than personal recommendation for two reasons. First, using empathy in personal recommendations runs the risk of usurping the decision-maker’s

agency, whereas the autonomy of the decision-maker is more likely to be preserved in externalized reporting. Secondly, externalized reporting is more likely to provide impartial information about the decision-maker's options, and giving impartial information meets a criterion for good advice, which will be discussed in greater detail below. Regarding the first point, personal recommendation can be morally assessed in a few different ways. Remember, personal recommendation is the act of advising someone by suggesting which option to choose or which option to avoid. In addition to his recommendation, the adviser can choose whether or not to share his reasoning behind his recommendation. In either case, the adviser's reasoning and motive for his choice is of moral significance. On the one hand, the adviser may consider the reasons for and/or against each option, and his recommendation is based on what appears to be the most rational choice. Through empathy, the adviser was able to acquire a firsthand grasp on the details of the decision-maker's situation and assess the degrees to which each option may be able to alleviate the distressful state associated with the decision-maker's deliberation. The adviser's motive for sharing his rational choice in the form of a recommendation may stem from a desire to simplify the deliberation process for the decision-maker with the intent of expediting the alleviation of the decision-maker's distress. Although the adviser's reasoning and motive may be morally commendable in this case, the decision-maker may "blindly" accept the recommendation without reviewing the adviser's considerations, thereby essentially allowing the adviser to make the decision for him. So, the adviser must take care to remind the decision-maker that it is not ultimately up to the adviser to make the decision, thus establishing a sense of self-other differentiation.

On the other hand, the adviser may primarily or solely take his own interests into consideration when thinking about the different options the decision-maker is faced with. The

adviser may base his recommendation on what he finds most desirable. The adviser's motive for making this recommendation may stem from a desire to persuade the decision-maker to believe or think the same as he, the adviser, does. What's more, the adviser may make the recommendation with the intent to gain some personal benefit from the decision-maker. In this case the adviser is very likely to usurp the agency of the decision-maker; a worry that Goldie expressed in his argument against empathy.

According to Goldie, the problem is that empathy is unable to operate with the type of agency that is involved in practical deliberation, which he refers to as a "full-blooded notion of agency" (2011). On his account, the full-blooded notion of agency requires the agent to take a "first-personal stance" towards his own thoughts, and this stance takes into account aspects of the agent's psychology such as personality traits and intelligence (Goldie, 2011). In this instance of empathy, the empathizer imagines being the target, which entails sharing in the aspects of the target's psychology involved in his first-personal stance. Goldie stipulates that only the target himself can take a first-personal stance towards his own thoughts (2011). Since the empathizer cannot take a first-personal stance towards the target's thoughts, he fails to empathize with the target under a full-blooded notion of agency. As a result, the empathizer imposes his own psychology onto the target's deliberation and reaches a decision based on his own stance towards the situation as opposed to the target's stance. If the empathizer advises the target to choose one option or avoid an option solely based on his own psychology, then he has made the decision for the target and has usurped the target's agency in this instance of practical deliberation. Externalized reporting of the information gained via empathy does not impose personal preferences on the decision-maker, keeping him in control of the decision.

The second reason for employing empathy in externalized reporting, as opposed to personal recommendation, is that it allows the empathizer to provide impartial information to the decision-maker. Sharing impartial information about the various options available to the decision-maker is a mark of giving good advice. In order to provide a definition of ‘good’ advice, I will draw a parallel between Richard Eggerman’s criteria for a good moral adviser and a set of criteria for good advice. According to Eggerman, “the good moral adviser appears to be a combination of certain character traits, intellectual skills, and relations to the situation at hand” (1979). The adviser must be sincere, conscientious, and non-dogmatic. The adviser needs to be adept at detecting fallacies in reasoning, envisioning potential consequences of actions, and able to refrain from belittling or complicating the situation. Finally, the adviser should have knowledge about the facts of the situation and should be a disinterested party such that the adviser is not directly related to the situation. From these criteria I suggest that advice is determined ‘good’ if it complies with the following criteria. The advice must be free of deceit in that it is not intended to benefit the adviser, especially at the expense of the target’s misfortune. The advice should be in accordance with, at the very least, conventional norms or preferably, with moral norms. The advice knowingly foreshadows apprehensible consequences. The advice is impartial to the adviser’s preferences and is the result of a fair-minded examination of the facts about the situation.

The elements involved empathy can contribute to the giving of good advice if *empathy as a skill* is exercised well. For instance, the motivation to match the decision-maker’s affective state arises from the adviser’s concern for the decision-maker’s well-being. A feeling of concern for another’s well-being seems to involve the avoidance of treating that person as a means to an end, which includes not deceiving the person. By this account, advice given by an empathizer

engaged in other-oriented affective matching is free of deceit. As part of exercising *empathy as a skill*, the adviser takes into consideration the conventional and/or moral norms involved in the decision-maker's situation when attaining information about the different options available to the decision-maker. The norm-type distinction as well as perceptions about the norm types are among the conditions that the adviser imagines when engaged in other-oriented affective matching. If the adviser exercises *empathy as a skill* well, then the advice he gives is more likely to be guided by relevant conventional and/or moral norms. By performing *empathy as a skill*, the adviser is able to make predictions about the effects of each option on the decision-maker's life as well as predictions about the degree to which each option may alleviate the decision-maker's distress. Furthermore, *empathy as a skill* requires the adviser to maintain a clear self-other differentiation which keeps the adviser mindful of the distinction between the adviser's feelings and the decision-maker's feelings. If the adviser properly performs self-other differentiation, then he is more likely to prevent the interference of his feelings in giving advice to the decision-maker. Lastly, the adviser is able to examine the situation by collecting the details of the decision-maker's situation via self-oriented perspective-shifting and by assessing the decision-maker's affective state via other-oriented affective matching. According to the criteria for good advice discussed above, it seems as though the adviser is able to produce good advice by using *empathy as a skill* to acquire the needed information for assisting the decision-maker. The following section examines the role of empathy in the acquisition of a fully-informed situation awareness, which is key in evaluating what reasons there are for each option and is key in influencing manner in which the advice is given to the decision-maker.

3.3 Fully-informed situation awareness

If you recall from chapter two, fully-informed situation awareness is one of two components necessary for identifying a reason as a “non-optional” reason as according to Scanlon’s cognitivist account of moral motivation (2009). Fully-informed situation awareness is defined as the state of impartially perceiving all the contents of the situation one finds oneself in. In chapter two, we examined fully-informed situation awareness in the context of an empathizer detecting a non-optional reason for helping the target and was able to detect the reason by acquiring fully-informed situation awareness through empathy. That discussion was about judging what actions are morally required in a given situation and then being motivated to follow through with the action. As explained above, the discussion in the current chapter is about deliberation on which final ends to pursue and the reasons for their pursuit. Nonetheless, fully-informed situation awareness is also a key component in evaluating the different reasons for pursuing certain goals or ends. The discussion on fully-informed situation awareness in chapter two differs from this chapter in that only the empathizer needs fully-informed situation awareness in the context described in chapter two, whereas both the target and empathizer need fully-informed situation awareness in the context described in this chapter. In the advice-giving paradigm, the adviser attempts to contribute to the decision-maker’s situation awareness by providing information about the available options. The adviser attains this information by engaging in *empathy as a skill*, which requires the adviser to imagine the conditions of the decision-maker’s deliberation and a fully-informed situation awareness helps to facilitate such imagination. This section examines the contributions of *empathy as a skill* to the fully-informed situation awareness of the empathizer, which then helps the empathizer to contribute to the target’s fully-informed situation awareness.

In deliberations about final ends, becoming fully-informed about the situation one finds oneself in involves recognizing the necessary means for the particular end, predicting possible outcomes of each choice and acknowledging one's responsibility for one's involvement in the situation. When presented with a difficult decision on which end to pursue, the decision-maker is able to make a sensible decision by acquiring a fully-informed situation awareness to help him carefully evaluate the reasons for pursuing each option. However, fully-informed situation awareness may not assist in detecting non-optional reasons for one end over another, rather it may assist in discerning which end the decision-maker has most reason for pursuing. Nonetheless, the detection of what one has most reason to pursue is significant for such important deliberations, and a fully-informed situation awareness is still valuable in this detection process. Be that as it may, the role of fully-informed situation awareness for the decision-maker does not rely on the use of empathy, but it does for the adviser.

As part of the imagination processes involved in *empathy as a skill*, the adviser imagines that he is presented with the difficult deliberation to familiarize himself with the conditions of the situation and imagines that those conditions arouse the affective state that the decision-maker is experiencing. The former process is the act of self-oriented perspective-shifting, and the latter process is the act of other-oriented affective matching. The information about the situation that the adviser gains in this manner consists of the benefits and/or risks of each option for the decision-maker as well as the degree to which each option may alleviate the decision-maker's distress and/or the degree that each option may cause future distress. The first set of information, i.e. benefit and risks, allows the adviser to evaluate common reasons associated with each option; the latter set of information allows the adviser to evaluate special reasons associated with the affective state of the decision-maker. The other-oriented affective matching in *empathy as a skill*

informs the adviser on the sensitivity of the manner by which he advises the decision-maker. As discussed in the previous section, the most appropriate manner by which to give advice in these cases is externalized reporting. The next section consists of a detailed example of an instance of advice-giving regarding a deliberation on an important life decision and demonstrates the role of *empathy as a skill* in giving the advice.

3.4 Empathy in deliberation

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the application of empathy in advice-giving is suitable for complex deliberations about constitutive or final ends as opposed to deliberations about the instrumental means to ends. In order to illustrate the use of empathy in giving advice about deciding on an end, let us consider an example in which my sister consults me on which of two job opportunities she should take. By using my capacities to recognize what affective state she is in, I see that she is in a deep state of confusion. By actively matching her affective state, I am able to understand how strong the confusion is. Now I have a baseline affective state and begin to engage in self-oriented perspective-shifting. I think about what it would be like for me if I were in her situation. On the one hand, job A offers a higher salary and better benefits than job B. On the other hand, job B provides opportunities to learn more about the profession and to improve the skills needed for career development. If I were to accept job A, then I would feel financially secure and probably less likely to stress over money issues. However, the lack of professional development in job A may cause me to feel stagnant and unhappy with my work life. If I were to accept job B, then I would have a more fulfilling experience in my work life, but may feel worried about financial matters. At this point, I have attained information about how my sister feels via other-oriented affective matching and about

how I might react to each option via self-oriented perspective-shifting. Thus, I have empathized with my sister and now have information to share with her by way of either personal recommendation or externalized reporting.

If I tell my sister that she should accept one job over the other based on my affective state associated with each option, then I am exercising personal recommendation. If I feel very strongly about having a fulfilling career more so than having a high paying salary, then I tell my sister that she should accept job B since it provides the career fulfillment that I am more inclined to. Or, I can tell my sister that she should not accept a job if it lacks a sense of fulfillment, and so she should not take job A. In either case, I am imposing my personal preferences onto my sister's decision.

If I intend to advise my sister via externalized reporting, then I would try to present my simulated predicted affective states to my sister in a tone of generalization. So, I could tell her that since financial security is more evident in job A than job B, then she most likely will not be stressed out about money but could be faced with unhappiness about the lack of chances for career development and promotion. Additionally, I could tell her that although professional development or career fulfillment is more evident in job B than in job A, she may be faced with financial restraints that can potentially cause unhappiness with other aspects of her life. Thus, I have shared the information that I attained via empathy with my sister in such a way that presents her with a different viewpoint on the situation and allows her to make an informed decision.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we looked at the practical application of empathy in the advice-giving paradigm, specifically deliberations about final ends. *Empathy as a skill* helps an adviser acquire information about the decision-maker's deliberation as well as guiding the adviser on the manner by which he presents the advice to the decision-maker. There are two manners of sharing such information, one of which is the favored manner in this thesis: externalized reporting. The decision-maker gains impartial information about her options and acquires a fuller awareness of her situation, which allows her to judge which final end she has most reason to pursue. On this account, if the decision-maker is a rational agent, then she will necessarily be motivated to pursue the end that she has judged to be most reasonable. By exercising *empathy as a skill* in the acquisition of situational information and the detection of reasons for the ends, the adviser is able to give good advice to the decision-maker, and giving good advice seems to be a morally commendable form of social interaction.

In addition to its role in advice-giving, I suggest that empathy may improve the joint-reasoning involved with making policies on such matters as judicial decisions, bioethical regulations, animal rights, etc. Finally, I propose that empathy serves as a key factor in determining the moral praiseworthiness of one's reasons for action. As a result, empathy may be considered a virtue that rational agents should strive to perform well in order to improve or maintain a high quality of social interactions.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have presented a narrow conceptualization of empathy, *empathy as a skill*, in which it is defined as a complex process consisting of two skills: other-oriented affective matching and self-oriented perspective-shifting. The former skill refers to the ability of intentionally conjuring up in oneself the same affective state as experienced by someone else in order to get a sense of what the other person feels. The latter skill, self-oriented perspective-shifting, refers to the ability of imagining the experience one might have if he were in another person's situation, commonly alluded to as figuratively putting oneself in another's shoes. The concept presented in this thesis differs from other concepts in that the affective and cognitive elements are both voluntary processes as opposed to the classification of the affective element as an involuntary response to the affective state of another person. The purpose of this distinction is to separate empathy from less sophisticated mental activities, such as sympathy, so that it becomes clearer as to what empathy's role is in the moral life. On this account, *empathy as a skill* functions as an epistemic tool in cases of advice-giving on deliberations about final ends.

We are often flummoxed about what to do when faced with a difficult situation in which a life-changing decision must be made. Seeking assistance with the decision in the form of advice is oftentimes beneficial for the decision-maker. The obvious benefit for the decision-maker is that he is presented with another viewpoint of the situation which has the potential to reveal options and/or reasons the decision-maker was unaware of. There are additional, less obvious benefits for the decision-maker. By receiving advice from an adviser exercising empathy, a sense of trust is either formed or strengthened between the decision-maker and the adviser. Trust among members of a social circle is an important factor in the quality of social interaction with others, which contributes to the overall quality of one's well-being. Furthermore,

the decision-maker is provided with experiential training for learning how to empathize with others and how to use it in interpersonal practical deliberation.

The decision-maker is not the only person who benefits from interpersonal practical deliberation and empathy. The adviser is also presented with benefits from employing empathy in advice-giving. The first benefit is that the adviser is able to provide help to another person, which may qualify as a kind of prosocial helping behavior. The adviser also gains the benefit of trust as discussed above regarding the decision-maker. Additionally, by empathizing with the decision-maker, the adviser's concern for the decision-maker's well-being is strengthened, which is a morally commendable trait. Moreover, advice-giving provides the adviser with an opportunity to practice recognizing and evaluating moral reasons in difficult deliberations.

An important factor in practical deliberation is to choose an action or an end based on morally appropriate reasons. For instance, an action or end based on self-interests is considered less morally praiseworthy than a prosocial action or reasonable end based on morally appropriate reasons. Concern for the well-being of others is an example of a morally appropriate reason for prosocial action (Masto, 2015). An aversion to feelings of guilt or blame for not performing a prosocial action is a morally inappropriate reason, albeit the action itself is morally praiseworthy. Masto suggests that empathy assists in the identification of the appropriateness of reasons for action (2015). However, I claim that empathizing with someone in instances of advice-giving is the key to detecting the appropriate reasons for each option so that the adviser is giving *good* advice, and it is the giving of good advice that is morally praiseworthy. Good advice requires unbiased knowledge about the options available. Unbiased knowledge requires data from different viewpoints. The combination of self-oriented perspective-shifting and other-oriented affective matching in *empathy as a skill* provides such data.

The discussion on empathy is an ongoing one in philosophy and psychology, which has brought about some insightful discoveries about the human brain and the nature of social interaction. The flipside is that most of these discoveries spark more questions, and the study of empathy is not exempt from this condition. There is still much debate on how to conceptualize empathy and what role empathy plays in the moral life. Although it may be seen as another hat thrown into the ring, this thesis was composed for the purposes of drawing attention to a new concept of empathy and demonstrating the practical application of empathy. The hope is that the consideration of *empathy as a skill* will encourage a new avenue of psychological research on the processes involved in empathy and its moral significance in the quality of social interactions.

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Vita

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