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Nietzsche's Theory of Empathy

Vasfi O. Özen

Abstract: Nietzsche is not known for his theory of empathy. A quick skimming of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on empathy demonstrates this. Arthur Schopenhauer, Robert Vischer, and Theodor Lipps are among those whose views are considered representative, but Nietzsche has been simply forgotten in discussion of empathy. Nietzsche's theory of empathy has not yet aroused sufficient interest among commentators. I believe that his views on this subject merit careful consideration. Nietzsche scholars have been interested in his naturalistic accounts of other phenomena, but there seems to be relatively limited interest in his naturalistic account of a phenomenon that is so central to his disagreement with Schopenhauer, namely, empathic concern for others. This is surprising because Nietzsche makes a valuable contribution; he has views more in keeping with contemporary theories of empathy than others of his time. My goal here is to fill in this gap in the scholarship and provide the first thorough analysis of Nietzsche's theory of empathy, which appears most clearly in *Dawn*.

Nietzsche is not known for his theory of empathy. A quick skimming of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on empathy demonstrates this. Arthur Schopenhauer, Robert Vischer, and Theodor Lipps are among those whose views are considered representative, but Nietzsche has been simply forgotten in discussion of empathy. Nietzsche's theory of empathy has not yet aroused sufficient interest among commentators. I believe that his views on this subject merit careful consideration.¹ Commentators have been interested in Nietzsche's naturalistic² accounts of other phenomena, but there seems to be relatively limited interest in

1 Even though a large body of literature has evolved over Nietzsche's critical evaluation of compassion (e.g., Frazer 2006; Bamford 2007; Von Tevenar 2007; Panaioti 2013; Harris 2017), his theory of empathy has by and large received a scant attention.

2 In the secondary literature, some emphasized the 'methodological' aspect of Nietzsche's naturalism (Leiter 2002), and others its 'artful' aspect (Acampora 2013). Here I do not take any substantial position on the subject. For the purposes of this paper, I (minimally) assume that Nietzsche appeals to naturalism primarily as a critical tool by which to counter metaphysical assumptions.

his naturalistic account of a phenomenon that is so central to his disagreement with Schopenhauer, namely, empathic concern for others. This is surprising because Nietzsche makes a valuable contribution; he has views more in keeping with contemporary theories of empathy than others of his time. My goal here is to fill in this gap in the scholarship and provide the first thorough analysis of Nietzsche's theory of empathy, which appears most clearly in *Dawn*.

Nietzsche develops his theory of empathy mainly in reaction to Schopenhauer's metaphysical understanding of compassion. According to Schopenhauer, in compassion, we have an unmediated perceptual access to another's inner state. This is a paradoxical phenomenon in the sense that it violates the principle of individuation. It goes against the way we ordinarily perceive others, by means of spatiotemporal intuition, as different and separate from us. An adequate and plausible explanation of compassion, Schopenhauer holds, can by no means 'be reached on the purely psychological path'; such explanation 'can be arrived at only metaphysically', because, in compassion, we overcome the individuation of the ego and find ourselves, in an unusual way, immediately drawn to the other person's suffering (BM 147). His suffering touches us directly as if 'it is precisely in his person, not in ours, that we feel the suffering' (BM 147), as if we 'share the suffering in him, in spite of the fact that his skin does not enclose [our] nerves' (BM 166). When we empathize, 'the individuality and fate of others are treated entirely like one's own' (WWR I 375), such that one's concern for others is exactly as strong as one's concern for one's own welfare. This suggests that, for Schopenhauer, other-oriented concern is necessarily built into the nature of empathy. Schopenhauer also claims that an ability for empathic attunement and responsiveness is an innate human disposition, i.e., 'it is original and immediate, it resides in human nature itself' (BM 148–149). Nietzsche dismisses this account of empathy and argues that a perfectly naturalistic account is possible.

Avoiding the metaphysical excesses of Schopenhauer's account was critical for Nietzsche to establish his own understanding of empathy as well as its difference from and relation to other emotional phenomena such as

compassion, the feeling of identification or oneness, and empathic concern. One general characteristic of Nietzsche's social-psychological explanations of empathy that deserves mention is that they anticipate the naturalism of his later writings. In this paper, I will spell out in detail the contrasting approaches of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer and draw attention to the naturalistic strain in Nietzsche's thinking about empathy.

At this point, a terminological note is appropriate. By 'empathy', I mean an affective responsiveness to the emotional state of another person, which includes an ability to share in that person's emotions and understand what he or she is experiencing. Unless the context states otherwise, I use the term 'sympathy' here to refer broadly to a sense of psychological closeness and perceived similarity to others, which entails a feeling of oneness between individuals. There is a significant difference between Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's understanding of 'feeling of oneness'. The feeling of oneness, for Schopenhauer, is a somewhat mystical intuition of numerical oneness with other individuals. For Nietzsche, however, fellow feeling involves a sense of being in solidarity with others who share a similar experience, yet still recognizing one another's numerical distinctiveness. *Mitleid* (literally 'suffering with', or typically translated as 'compassion'), for Schopenhauer, consists of three distinct but interrelated components, namely, the cognitive capacity to represent another's internal state, the affective participation in another's experience, and a motivation to care for others and express concern for their well-being. I follow the contemporary psychological usage and call the motivational component of compassion 'empathic concern', which corresponds to Nietzsche's notion of 'sympathetic affection' (*sympathische Affection*; D 143). Empathic concern or sympathetic affection, broadly construed, refers to any other-oriented tendency to respond to the well-being of someone in distress. For Schopenhauer, the empathically concerned witness to another's distress helps simply because she desires to alleviate that suffering. Schopenhauer claims that only perception of and affective participation in another's distress (i.e., 'empathic distress') incites genuine empathic concern. Based on this conceptual framework, compassion can be defined as empathy (i.e., comprehending and sharing in another's emotional state) plus empathic concern (i.e., an other-oriented

concern elicited by the perceived needs of another individual), both of which, for Schopenhauer, go together and necessarily entail each other. Nietzsche operates with a similar conceptual framework. Yet, he denies that these two components, empathy and other-oriented concern, necessarily go together and form a unit. He also dismisses Schopenhauer's claim that other-oriented concern arises solely out of empathic distress (BM 146). I suggest that, for Nietzsche, the prospect of vicariously sharing in another's joy at overcoming some need or adversity (i.e., 'empathic joy') carries more motivational force for genuine sympathetic affection than mere empathic distress does.

A quick remark about my methodology and aim may be helpful as well. Perhaps I should first highlight that I do not offer a Nietzschean theory of empathy, but rather I attempt to analyze Nietzsche's theory of empathy (*Theorie der Mitempfindung*), as well as discuss in footnotes its significance and relevance for contemporary psychological research (especially for the reader with interest in the specific details). One might point out that Nietzsche's goal in articulating a theory of empathy is not just to confront Schopenhauer's views on compassion and suggest that he has a better way to explain this phenomenon. There is something more at work. Nietzsche's theory of empathy cannot be understood without a discussion of its normative implications, specifically, its ultimate aim in liberating the reader from the presumptions and prejudices of morality. I aim to give a balanced account of Nietzsche's theory of empathy, by acknowledging both the positive and negative elements of this construct. But in an attempt to do justice to the complexity of the subject matter, I limit my focus to psychological and social aspects of the theory and defer any substantial discussion of normative implications for another project (see footnote 8).³

We now come to the plan of the paper. In Section 1, I set out Nietzsche's discussion of sympathy, alliance, and social instinct in *Human, All Too*

3 Thanks to Matthew Meyer who pressed me on this point concerning the methodology and aim during the 2021 Central APA where I presented a shorter version of the material as a symposium paper.

Human, describing how human beings come to experience a subjective sense of perceived similarity to one another, which in turn reveals the beginnings of empathic responding. While Nietzsche's central idea here, that having some degree of sympathetic attunement and shared feeling is a prerequisite for empathy, is intriguing, it is not fully substantiated, nor does it help to shed sufficient light on his understanding of empathy. The main goal of Section 2 is to show that, for Nietzsche, empathy relies on an originally non-moral or amoral capacity to understand another's state of mind by means of their expressions, a capacity that is only later moralized. Here I use "non-moral" or "amoral" in the sense of not necessarily being motivated by a concern for others' well-being. I discuss the preeminent interpretive issues in the secondary literature relating to the essentially fear driven character of empathic response. What is distinctive about Nietzsche's naturalistic approach is its attempt to explore the origin and development of empathy and other-oriented concern at both the evolutionary and the psychological level. In my view, however, this attempt, despite its promising start, does not fully succeed. I begin my analysis by examining Nietzsche's theory of empathy (*Mitempfung*), as presented in D, paying particular attention to the basic psychological mechanisms behind empathy and its evolutionary significance. I suggest that, for Nietzsche, empathy is a special form of imaginative or representational activity whose function is to convey a sense of alliance and connection with others. I then turn to Nietzsche's views on mimicry and its socially adaptive functions in D. Specifically, I examine Nietzsche's views on the origin of mimicry as well as its role in understanding the emotions of others, creating greater feelings of affiliation and liking between individuals, and facilitating helping behavior. Next, I examine Nietzsche's key insights into the nature and emergence of human sociality. I argue that, for Nietzsche, social instinct in humans, i.e., the propensity to engage with and enjoy intimate and interpersonal relationships, is not primary, but rather acquired, that is, the human individual has a certain genetic potential to learn and become a social being if given the conducive environment. This social instinct evolves and gives rise to empathy and sympathetic

orientations towards others. I conclude my analysis of Nietzsche's theory of empathy by briefly contrasting it with Schopenhauer's metaphysical account. In Section 3, I outline Nietzsche's understanding of fellow feeling and empathic concern in contrast to Schopenhauer's account. I discuss Nietzsche's different evaluations of sympathetic affection in D and HH. I end in Section 4 by noting what my analysis reveals about Nietzsche's thinking on empathy.

1. Sense of Alliance, Sociality, and Sympathetic Agreement

HH (1878) contains some of Nietzsche's earliest explorations of the empathic process, its emergence, and its effect on prosocial sensibilities and behavior, which are crucial insofar as they provide the basic framework for his later, more mature and complex explanations of empathy and other related phenomena, such as compassion and the motivation to attend to the needs of others. Nietzsche's aim here is to expose the metaphysical excesses of philosophy by adopting a historical perspective in approaching the issues of moral psychology. To illustrate this, I would like to begin my analysis by considering the following passage in which Nietzsche hypothesizes about how a feeling of sympathetic and mutual understanding emerges and leads to a sense of "alliance" (*Bündniss*) between individuals, and how such heightened "feeling of with-ness" (*Mitgefühl*), in turn, sets up the possibility for "concern for others" (*Fürsorge für Andere*):

Pleasure and social instinct—From our relations with other people, we gain a new class of pleasures beyond those sensations of pleasure that we get from ourselves, thereby considerably extending the realm of pleasurable sensations. Much that pertains to this has perhaps come down to us from animals, who obviously feel pleasure when they play with one another, especially mothers with their young. And then consider sexual relations, which make almost every female seem interesting to every male in regard to pleasure, and vice versa. In general, the sensation of pleasure based upon human relations makes human beings better; the joy that is shared, the pleasure that is enjoyed together, is enhanced; it reassures the individual, makes him better-natured, dispels mistrust, envy: for he feels happy himself and sees others feeling happy in the same way. Similar expressions of pleasure awaken the phantasy of empathy, a feeling of being somewhat alike [*die Phantasie der*

Mitempfindung, das Gefühl etwas Gleiches zu sein]: common sufferings, the same storms, dangers, enemies do the same thing, too. On this, then, the oldest alliance is built: the import of which is, everyone together turns away and defends against threatened displeasure for the benefit of every individual. And thus the social instinct [*soziale Instinct*] grows forth from pleasure (HH I 98; translation slightly modified).

What is distinctive about Nietzsche's approach here is that our other-oriented tendencies are shaped by a combination of natural selection and adaptation to a changing environment. It incorporates biologically evolved mechanisms as well as socially determined experiences and exposures. Elaborating on the precise relation between the biological and the social in the origin and development of empathy (which entails assuming another's emotional perspective and feeling concern for their welfare) will be one of my central tasks in what follows. Humans, according to Nietzsche, have inherited from animals many instinctual tendencies that emerge under certain conditions, one of which involves our gregariousness, i.e., our instinct for living in groups and our desire to be with others and be accepted by them. Elsewhere Nietzsche points out that the 'protocols' of a 'social morality' such as a basic sense of alliance and the existence of some form of social organization and cooperative endeavor 'can be found, in crude form, everywhere, even down to the deepest depths of the animal world' (D 26).⁴ But Nietzsche also seems to embrace here the idea that it is through a long socialization process that humans have generally adapted to living in a social community with one another.

An implicit assumption in Nietzsche's discussion in HH I 98 is that safety and livelihood are always among one's paramount considerations. And Nietzsche appears to be suggesting that human beings are inclined towards interpersonal relationships primarily to satisfy such needs. After all, a life in which one is accepted, valued, and protected by others is

4 Considerable empirical evidence supports Nietzsche's claim. As the primatologist Frans de Waal notes, 'Alliances (either to defend oneself against aggression or to collectively defeat or overthrow rivals) are among the best documented forms of cooperation in primatology, involving many studies and thousands of observations' (2015, 66).

better than a life in which one is at the mercy of external influences or one is always on guard (provided that safety is one's primary concern). But besides these perceived rewards of group living, Nietzsche hypothesizes, interpersonal relationships also produce intrinsic benefits for the individuals within such relationships. Simply put, it feels good to be accepted and cared for. But it feels good to see others do good as well; and it feels even better when we contribute to one another's well-being. And it is this feature of interpersonal relationships, Nietzsche points out, that ultimately transforms the way the individual sees, feels, and acts towards other people. Having a sense of confidence and trust in one's community inclines interactants to feel positive regard towards one another and take pleasure in being embedded in the same social structure. And based on the success of our empathic attunement, i.e., the accuracy with which we are tuned in to the subjectivity of others, we 'gradually habituate ourselves to feeling the same way as those around us, and because sympathetic agreement and mutual understanding [*sympathisches Zustimmung und Sichverstehen*] are so pleasant, we soon bear all the signs and partisan colors of our surroundings' (HH I 371). This way of coming to occupy a similar psychological state to that of the other person, in turn, promotes social bonding (i.e., a sense of alliance and connectedness). Consequently, individuals now relate to one another's experiences more easily because they experience and witness each other experiencing a sense of sympathy, i.e., the feeling that other members of the group are sort of like myself. In sum, Nietzsche's view here is that social interactions awaken the imaginative or representational capacities of empathy. It is these awakened capacities of empathy that Nietzsche seems to suggest facilitate our sharing in the emotional content of others and attaining a mutual sympathetic bond of some sort, out of which a sense of alliance and fellowship ensues.

I believe Nietzsche's above assertions about human sociality and sympathy are likely to be informed by Friedrich Albert Lange's critical exposition of the psychological views of the French Moralists, especially of the eighteenth century. In a representative passage from his *History of Materialism and Critique of Its Present Importance* (1866), a work Nietzsche was highly

acquainted with, Lange cites Julien Offray de La Mettrie's emphasis on the importance of 'sympathy' as the basis for the development of prosocial feelings and other-oriented concern: "We are enriched in a manner by the good that we do, we participate in the joy that we confer" (*History of Materialism*, Vol. II, 84). However, Lange points out that a more elegant and explicit expression of this idea is to be found in Comte de Volney's *Catechism of the French Citizen*: 'Nature, it is there said, has organized man for society. "In giving him sensations, she so organised him that the sensations of others are mirrored in him, and awaken answering sensations of pleasure, of pain, of sympathy, that make the charm and indissoluble bond of society"' (*History of Materialism*, Vol. II, 85). Put simply, Volney's basic idea here seems to be that the capacity to share another person's emotions with mutual susceptibility provides a basis for social bonding. Both La Mettrie and Volney view the human tendency for sociality and affiliation as involving progressively more sophisticated capacities such as understanding others' emotional and mental states, engaging with others' needs, and converting sympathy into concern and hence to prosocial behavior. In at least one respect, Volney's analysis of social instinct in terms of primary other-oriented drives towards group cohesion comes closer to Nietzsche's. Yet I believe Nietzsche seems to emphasize more than La Mettrie and Volney do how the social context influences and redirects our other-oriented tendencies.

In HH I 98 Nietzsche concentrates on certain prosocial tendencies in humans that are, seemingly, the necessary indicators of the beginnings of empathic awareness and responding. Yet, and this is an important point, for Nietzsche, these prosocial processes and affective mechanisms by which emotional states spread from one person to another do not give rise to genuine empathy but to a kind of imaginary or fancied empathy. Also, Nietzsche's explanation in HH I 371 concerns only how in order to avoid conflict conspecifics tend to develop similar feelings, emotions, and experiences when facing similar situations, which can contribute to enhanced collaboration among the group members. However, this again does not concern empathy but rather the question of how members of a group come to share the same emotional mind set or attunement, how

they come to develop an understanding and a sensibility of their environment. The above passages about human sociality do not contain any explanation of either how we come to feel the specific emotion a specific person might come to feel on a specific occasion, or how human beings in general come to recognize and acknowledge one another's feelings of sadness, fear, etc. In other words, it is not entirely clear how exactly we ought to understand the phrase, "the phantasy of empathy" in the context of identifying with someone's emotional state. I believe this rather puzzling phrase only begins to make sense once we turn to Nietzsche's account of emotional representation of a specific experience in D 142 in the next section.

Now, judging from the above discussion, Nietzsche's account clearly does not provide a satisfactory analysis and therefore leaves many gaps to be filled in. One wonders, for instance, what are the psychological mechanisms that underlie sociality in humans? And most significantly, how did we become more considerate of others? Identifying and individuating the primary psychological processes involved in the act of empathic responding to another's experience will be important for our understanding of Nietzsche's position. In the next section, I will attempt to address these issues from Nietzsche's point of view.

2. Mimicry and the Phantasy of Empathy

In D (1881) Nietzsche outlines a naturalistic theory of *Mitempfindung*⁵ (literally 'feeling with' or alternatively translated as 'empathy'), mainly in

5 In 1835, the physiologist Johannes Müller coined the term '*Mitempfindung*' to describe the phenomenon in which a stimulus applied in one area of the body is felt as an itch in a different area of the body—a term still used both in English and non-English published medical literature. Müller defines this phenomenon as follows: 'Sometimes one sensation excites another, or the sensations spread morbidly further than the affected parts. These phenomena, which I call *Mitempfindungen*, are not rare in healthy life' (*Handbuch der Physiologie*, Vol. 1, 680; my translation). Nietzsche was familiar with this seminal work (possibly through Friedrich Albert Lange). Yet, it is not certain whether he appropriated the term from Müller. According to the historian Ute Frevert (2011, 176–177), the term was reintroduced in the 1847 edition of the German *Brockhaus* as the 'spontaneous imitation of somebody else's sentiment', and this basic definition has remained the same over the years.

reaction to Schopenhauer's understanding of the empathic process. This theory seeks to answer important questions such as 'What is empathy?', 'What are the potential antecedents of empathic process?', 'Why has empathy evolved?', and 'What evolutionary function does empathy serve?' Although they are far from exhaustive, Nietzsche's reflections on the origin and nature of empathy offer a highly compelling and viable perspective.

Empathy.—In order to understand another person, in other words, to reproduce his feeling in ourselves, we do indeed from time to time return to the reason for his feeling one way or another and ask, for instance: Why is this person depressed?—In order, then, for the same reason, to experience the same depression ourselves; but it is much more common to dispense with this and to produce the feeling in ourselves according to the effects it exerts and displays on the other person in that we reproduce with our body (at least we approach a faint similarity in the play of muscle and in innervation) the expression of his eyes, his voice, his gait, his bearing ... Then there arises in us a similar feeling, as a result of an age-old association between movement and sensation [*in Folge einer alten Association von Bewegung und Empfindung*], which have been thoroughly conditioned to move back and forth from one to the other. We have come a long way in developing this skill for understanding other people's feelings, and in the presence of another person we are, almost automatically, always employing it: observe in particular the play of lineaments on the faces of women, how they quiver and glitter from ceaseless reproduction and mirroring [*Nachbilden und Widerspiegeln*] of everything that is being sensed around them ... If we ask ourselves how the reproduction of other people's feelings has become such second nature for us, there can be no doubt about the answer: as the most timorous of all creatures, the human being, by virtue of his subtle and fragile nature, has had in his timidity the intractness of that empathy, of that rapid understanding for the feelings of others (and of animals as well) ... When I proceed from a theory of empathy [*Mitempfindung*] such as I have presented here and then consider the contemporary favorite and downright sacred theory of a mystical process, by virtue of which compassion [*Mitleid*] transforms two essential beings into one and to such an extent that each is vouchsafed unmediated understanding of the other ... such a clear-headed thinker as Schopenhauer took pleasure in such rapturous and worthless poppycock. (D 142)

Commentators are almost unanimous in interpreting Nietzsche's conception of empathy here as a primarily fear-driven capacity with an attentional focus on the perceived weaknesses of others. Ruth Abbey, for

instance, points out that Nietzsche's main goal in D 142 is 'to discredit empathetic feeling by showing it to emanate from fear and mistrust' (2000, 63). It is due to this fear-driven nature, Richardson claims, 'Nietzsche's empathy seems not to care for its objects in any way that will lead to benefiting actions' and therefore manifests itself as an 'aggressive curiosity into the limitations of other people' (2004, 180). Rebecca Bamford expands on these suggestions, noting that 'this theory of empathy provides a drive-based psycho-physiological explanation for the way in which customary morality consistently reinforces a social mood of superstitious fear' (2018, 33). Keith Ansell-Pearson and Michael Ure claim that the core of Nietzsche's theory of empathy is primarily epistemic, not social (or ethical, for that matter). More specifically, Nietzsche's theory construes empathy as a matter of a singular individual actively utilizing cognitive processes to infer others' mental states to exert power over and/or control over them (2017, 286, n. 18). This interpretation is now taken to be the standard rendering of Nietzsche's own understanding of empathy and empathetic responding inside and outside Nietzsche scholarship. Elisa Aaltola, for instance, writes in her *Varieties of Empathy* that, 'The epitome of the disconnected cognitive empathizer is nothing less than a Nietzschean individual, dizzy under the spell of competitive, hierarchical, manipulative and egoistic desires for control over others' (2018, 63–64).

There are two things to be noted here. First, the commentators seem to overestimate the epistemic credentials of empathy. From early on, Nietzsche had been skeptical of the accuracy of our empathic inferences, about which he says, they 'are premature and have to be so' (HH I 32). And we see him maintaining such skepticism throughout his later writings. Consider the following passage, for instance:

In an animated conversation I often see the face of the person with whom I am talking so clearly and so subtly determined in accordance with the thought he expresses, or that I believe has been produced in him, that this degree of clarity far surpasses my powers of vision: so the subtle shades of the play of the muscles and the expression of the eyes must have been made up by me. Probably the person made an altogether different face, or none at all. (BGE 192)

Nietzsche's concern here is with the psycho-physiological structure of our empathic experience, the way we perceive or imagine the cues and signals others give us. According to Ansell-Pearson and Ure, 'empathy is motivated by a purely selfish greed to appropriate others' eyes for the sake of expanding or refining one's own vision' (2017, 286, n. 18). Yet, in BGE 192, Nietzsche speaks of how we tend to misunderstand others in empathy. He seems to doubt the unique power of empathic vision to provide us with a deep, multiperspectival understanding of another's subjective experience.

Second, indeed, in D, Nietzsche unambiguously speaks of empathic receptivity as rooted in our fear of the unknown, or of others' reactions, feelings, and intuitions about us, and how such receptivity, in turn, contributes to the social transfer of fear between individuals. Nietzsche also concedes that our striving for distinction in social life moves us to keep a constant watch on others to know their thoughts and emotional states, 'but the empathy [*die Mitempfindung*] and the being-in-the-know, which this drive requires for its gratification, are far from harmless or compassionate or benevolent' (D 113). What both HH and D have in common is a call to examine the nature and characteristics of moral sensations through rigorous psychological analysis and observation so that we can recover and redeem from the illusions of religious and metaphysical assumptions that still inform and shape our moral thinking. In HH, Nietzsche especially brings to our attention that 'a false ethics is constructed on the basis of an erroneous analysis of moral phenomena (HH I 37). And in the preface added later to the first volume of HH (1886), he announces his intention in 'speaking immorally, extramorally, "beyond good and evil"' to identify and explore the non-moral origins and function of morality (HH I "Preface" 1). In D, he makes more explicit this naturalistic, immoralist project 'to undermine our trust in morality' (D 2), by demonstrating what we tend to highly value or deem to be sacred to be ignoble, suspicious, lowly, and all-too-human. However, we should be careful in interpreting these seemingly immoral, or anti-moral, statements, especially those regarding empathy and its role within customary morality. As Ansell-Pearson and

Bamford correctly observe, in D, and I would say also in HH, the ultimate goal of Nietzsche's critique is to open up space for 'a free and creative ethical imagination ... through rejection of mindless adherence to compassion-based morality' (2020, 109). In this regard, it needs to be highlighted that Nietzsche's position on empathy is far more multifaceted than it might initially appear. The objectives of both HH and D do not necessarily coincide even though they certainly feed into one another. In D, Nietzsche is more concerned with a critique and investigation into the foundation of our moral beliefs, the specific ways in which empathy can be deployed to dominate or deceive others. Or similarly, he describes how excess empathic tendencies can be detrimental to the individual and society. In HH, on the other hand, Nietzsche indicates the possibility of an alternative approach to the ethical by drawing out some of empathy's more positive and transformative qualities, but, in my view, he does not fully articulate this until his later writings. He remarks on the social instinct for establishing relations, on the human tendency to observe and imitate prosocial behaviors without any moral underpinnings—expressing specifically his positive regard for our susceptibility to catch others' joy (i.e., empathic joy) rather than their suffering (i.e., empathic distress). The Nietzsche of HH seems to lay the emphasis more on empathy's potential role in undermining feelings of antagonism and facilitating a state of sympathetic agreement and mutual understanding between individuals. What seems to be far less highlighted and discussed by the commentators is that the key passages such as HH I 98 regarding the pleasures of social interaction, HH I 216 regarding social mimicry, and HH I 371 regarding sympathetic agreement clearly suggest that Nietzsche singles out empathy as key to establishing increased other-oriented relationships, trust, and social closeness. I will say more in the next section on Nietzsche's understanding of sympathetic affection and comment on his differing assessments of its nature and significance.

In the light of this textual context and overview of the major interpretive issues surrounding Nietzsche's views on empathy, I would now like to more closely examine his theory in D 142. The discussion in that passage can be

divided into three parts: the basic cognitive–affective mechanisms and processes in empathy; a quasi-evolutionary account of empathy; and Nietzsche's criticism of Schopenhauer's characterization of empathic process. Let us begin with the first part. Here I understand Nietzsche to be characterizing empathy as comprising three antecedent conditions: (i) a basic vicarious emotional reaction to emotional stimuli, specifically to the perceived emotional experience of the other person (following Nietzsche's terminology, let us call this process of 'emotion perception (*Wahrnehmung*) and reproduction (*Nachbilden*)' simply 'mirroring (*Wiederspiegeln*)'), (ii) coming to grasp the reason for or motive behind another's emotional response (I will call this state 'representational emotional knowing'), and (iii) perceived emotional synchrony with others or emotional communion (e.g., feelings such as 'We all felt as one despite our differences'). Contemporary psychology uses the term 'self-transcendent emotions' to describe complex emotions such as sympathy and compassion that enable one to move beyond one's narrow self-concern and take an other-oriented perspective.⁶ Following Nietzsche's own terminology, I will refer to this condition as 'sympathetic agreement', which is based on 'the phantasy of empathy', that is, the experience of seeing someone else as like oneself in the way he currently feels.

Now, let us elaborate on this model of empathy. The first thing that needs to be clarified is what one's coming to grasp the reason for another's emotional response entails. Even though Nietzsche is not explicit about what exactly constitutes 'representational emotional knowing', which creates problems of interpretation, some tentative suggestions can nevertheless be offered. The reason for another's emotional response could mean any of the following:⁷

- (a) The real or underlying causes of the person's emotional experience.

⁶ See Stellar *et al.* 2017 for an illuminating account of this concept.

⁷ The following discussion on how we come to grasp the reason for another's emotional response incorporates the written critical comments and suggestions of Paul Katsafanas.

- (b) The person's beliefs about these causes.
- (c) Facts about what (if anything) justifies the emotional response.
- (d) The person's beliefs about what justifies the emotional response.

One may claim these can all come apart. Let us illustrate this with an example on the same theme as Nietzsche's own example in D 142. Suppose that I come across a friend who is feeling very depressed. Let us further assume the following:

- (a)* The real cause of my friend's depression is a general dissatisfaction with life, or loss of sense of direction and purpose.
- (b)* Her belief about the cause of her depression is that she just lost out on a really good job.
- (c)* Almost a year ago, she started withdrawing from friends and family, losing interest in activities that were once a source of fulfillment and strength to her.
- (d)* Her justification for her depression is that she can no longer pursue a career that she felt was more aligned with her interests.

Now the immediate question is, when I empathize with my friend, am I supposed to discern (a)*, (b)*, (c)*, or (d)*? Presumably, one may say, not (a)* or (c)*. This would be too demanding and would involve a more detached, analytical stance. So presumably it would be (b)* or (d)*.

But then this brings us to several issues. First, in cases like the one we described, the person who is the target of empathy has an inaccurate conception of her own emotional state. In the above example, my friend thinks she is experiencing depression (and correctly so), but she might better be described as experiencing something else: a general dissatisfaction with life, or loss of sense of direction and purpose. Even if we can reasonably describe this as a case of depression, the depression is only the surface of what seems to be happening in the larger dynamic. When I empathize with my friend, presumably I am supposed to be mirroring her depression rather than the larger emotional complex of which it is part. But then, one may ask, what are we supposed to be doing when we think about the reasons for the

emotional response? The critic might say that my friend's own beliefs about what causes or justifies her emotion will be inaccurate, because she will not see what the emotion is and how it connects to the larger psychological dynamics. Many passages in Nietzsche's writings actually support this idea. Nietzsche contends that we are typically very bad at self-observation and self-understanding in that we tend to be less aware of the deep complexity of our mental processes (see HH II 223, D 119, GS 112). So, my friend may have some belief such as 'I am depressed because I lost out on a really good job', but this belief is at best incomplete and is probably distorting as well. So, the critic might ask, when I empathize with my friend, am I just supposed to pick up this incomplete/distorted belief?

In response to the critic, I should first point out that empathy in its elemental, basic form, as 'mirroring' is far from being sufficient to help us appreciate and understand another's subjective emotional experience. And what we discern in our empathic encounters are not typically facts about another's emotional life, i.e., (a)* or (c)*. However, because of our shared experiences, I can more reliably predict, understand (at least to some degree), and respond appropriately to my friend's depression and its underlying aspects. I may, for instance, quickly infer that her depression is not simply due to a loss of employment opportunity (on the basis of what I know about other relevant facts of her life). Even though she may not, by herself, be able to fully cope with all the intricacies of her emotional life, I may help her formulate her feelings and thoughts through my mirroring and reflecting on her experiences. And Nietzsche indeed allows for the possibility of deeper communication and mutual understanding among friends and acquaintances (see GS 338). Granted that, normally we do not have such ready access to others' emotional life; rather, the only access we have is an indirect one, which is often affected by a distorted or generalized version of our own mental lives (see GS 354, KSA 11, 34 [46], KSA 11, 37 [4]). And I also recognize that the influences of motives on cognition are so pervasive and so complex that emotions we recognize in others usually dissipate or become trivialized in the process of being shared, hence not allowing for the true meaning of the emotional experiences of individuals to be

exposed. Furthermore, we do not necessarily experience others' emotions with the same intensity and accuracy as they do.⁸

Based on the above framework, at least four conclusions can be drawn concerning empathy's general function. First, 'mirroring' is constitutive of all forms of empathy, which enables us to begin to process the emotional content of our interactions with others.

Second, empathy, in its fully fledged form, requires effort because we have no direct access to another's mental life, and empathy often involves focusing on the aspects of a mental life that are unfamiliar to us. In other words, one may not understand all dimensions of another's experiential state.

Third, empathy comes in degrees and can be manifested by a simple affective match involving automatic processes of mimicry and synchrony of bodily action, and at times evolving to a more complex form of psychological understanding that arises in the imaginative transposition of oneself into another's emotional state or context. The ability to empathize depends on one's ability to relate the empathized feeling back to oneself.

Fourth, one important factor that affects empathy is the feelings of similarity or dissimilarity: empathy is likely to manifest differently when the other is perceived to be more similar to than dissimilar from oneself. Furthermore, empathetic interactions are likely to be positively influenced by the feelings of commonality and bonds of mutual understanding (*Sich-verstehen*). Here it should be highlighted that mutual understanding does not necessarily mean that individuals gain immediate or accurate insight

8 In this paper, I give a very broad characterization of empathy and empathic concern. For Nietzsche, our natural empathic dispositions can develop and be expressed either in unhealthy ways, on the basis of some shared, false beliefs and conceptions about ourselves (one may call this 'herd-perspective'), or in healthier ways. Nietzsche, I think, operates implicitly with the distinction between 'herd-empathy' (or what he calls *Mitleid* or compassion) and healthier expressions of empathy that ultimately provide the possibility of a heightened awareness of one's self in relation to others through gaining greater control over one's emotional responses. And this healthier kind of empathy, for Nietzsche, stands in the service of human freedom; such empathy leads to self-understanding and understanding of others, which in turn helps us connect with a higher human culture. I call such empathy 'anticipatory empathy' and have argued for its significance for Nietzsche in a different paper (see my 'Nietzsche's Compassion', forthcoming in *Nietzsche-Studien*).

into one another's emotional states, i.e., their underlying motivations and causes. Rather, mutual understanding minimally implies a felt similarity or a sense of interpersonal congruence among group members with respect to subjective meanings and the ways in which individuals experience the social world and act in it.

On my reading of D 142, if only the first antecedent condition of empathy (i.e., mirroring) is met, then one would simply enter a state of emotional contagion, the most primitive antecedent of empathy. Such receptiveness to another's emotional cues most often occurs at an automatic or unconscious level, without the awareness that one's vicarious response is caused by another's emotional state, and, for that matter, it does not involve an intentionality that is directed towards the other or presuppose any sort of understanding of what the other is experiencing and the feelings associated with that experience. Affective contagion is spontaneous and immediate; it does not require any cognitive effort or attention.

Nietzsche's model of empathy (setting aside its seemingly sexist assumptions⁹) starts from the observation that people tend to synchronize their postures, mannerisms, vocal productions, and facial expressions to those with whom they interact. These mechanisms of motor and affective mimicry, in turn, enable individuals to attune to one another's subjective experience, and eventually facilitate the processes of emotion perception and reproduction. Specifically, observing others' emotional displays elicits certain physiological impressions on our senses and body. Through these impressions, we initially come to recognize someone's expressed behavior as a psychologically meaningful signal. It is worth stressing that, for Nietzsche, our perceptions of others' behaviors are not perceptions of a string of bare, meaningless physical signs. It is not that our intersubjective

9 Nietzsche's specific emphasis on women's tendency to mimic others or catch others' emotional facial expressions does not sound flattering to me. One may, nevertheless, suggest that Nietzsche is implicitly admonishing women to strategically exploit their prowess in mimicry to get ahead in a prevailing sexist culture. For the purposes of this paper, I remain silent on how best to understand Nietzsche's sexist or seemingly sexist remarks about women.

interactions occur as if we first observe some movements and then attribute to them a specific psychological meaning. As indicated in D 142, a reciprocal interchange necessarily obtains throughout between sensation (*Empfindung*) and movement (*Bewegung*), or in other words, between perception and action.¹⁰ And it is due to this interchange that we readily recognize emotions expressed in body movement or sense (*empfinden*) the external signs of another's affect without necessarily experiencing the same affect. For instance, when I see you sinking into a chair with a deep sigh, I automatically read your emotional signals or catch your emotional clues and share in your feeling of sadness.

Our initial reactions to others' (emotionally) expressive acts are visceral and automatic; thus, in some instances they may fail to penetrate consciousness and generate a distinct representational state in our minds. For instance, one is often tuned to react to another's emotional signal without any awareness that one's vicarious distress is simply caused by the other's distress. The emotion experienced as a result of such unconscious and involuntary re-enactment of an observed emotional expression does not count as representational emotional knowing. Representational emotional knowing occurs only when one is aware that one's own representational state is caused by the interaction with the other.

One may wonder at this point how exactly we make the transition from automatic (i.e., subconscious) perceptual processing of emotional impressions to knowing (or believing) something about another's inner state. Although he is not explicit about this point, D 142 gives us some ground to speculate that, for Nietzsche, our emotional impressions of others typically elicit a corresponding (emotional) content from our memory, which, in turn, helps awaken attention (and excite interest)

10 For the parallels between Nietzsche's theory and modern theories of empathy, see Preston (2007, 428–33). According to Preston (2007, 429), Lipps (1903) was apparently the first to propose the idea that shared representations provide the cognitive basis for perceiving and generating action. Yet, I maintain, the elements of a perception–action model are already present in Nietzsche's theory of *Mitempfindung*. I believe that I am the first to recognize the connection between Nietzsche's theory and the contemporary perception–action model.

towards another's movement and emotionality. Once our attention is directed to a particular individual and his/her experiential state, we can then form ideas and reason about that individual's feelings and needs.

From all this it follows that it is only when the first and second conditions, namely 'mirroring' and 'representational emotional knowing', are met together that one has the potential to discern, to varying degrees and varying degrees of success, another's emotional state, to understand its causes and effects, as well as to sense what attitudes, decisions, and actions will likely to follow from such state. Yet, in order for fully fledged empathy to exist, all three conditions need to be present. Here Nietzsche's claim, taken in conjunction with his previous analysis of 'sympathetic agreement' in HH, seems to be that empathy in its highest form involves an increased mutual awareness and understanding, in which each person comes to feel and think as the other person feels and thinks, and each is aware that the other is aware how each is feeling and thinking. This suggests that, for Nietzsche, empathy is more than a perception of another's internal state; it is a special form of imaginative or representational activity whose function is to convey a sense of alliance and a kind of self-conscious like-mindedness.

Some commentators seem to understand empathy as consisting only of spontaneous as well as intentional mimicry reactions that do not translate to knowing another's emotional and cognitive state. Abbey, for instance, writes, 'those who appear to feel the same emotion as their neighbor are really only successfully imitating its effects'. Thus, she concludes, 'it looks as if manifesting the signs of another's emotions is the furthest that fellow-feeling can go, for Nietzsche contends that it is almost impossible to know exactly how another feels or what they suffer' (2000, 63). For Abbey, the empathic process exclusively relies on 'emotion perception and reproduction', or simply 'mirroring', and it never makes it to the next stage, i.e., 'representational emotional knowing'. Here Abbey appears to merge Nietzsche's discussion of empathy in D and his critique of compassion in GS. It is true that in GS 338 Nietzsche claims that we cannot have direct access to another's subjective states. Nevertheless, this does not represent

an obstacle to our ability to perceive another's expressive communicative behavior and ascribe to that person, in accordance with the representational content of our perceptual experience, a certain kind of mental state. The mere fact that we cannot arrive at an exact understanding of another's expression of their feelings does not mean, for Nietzsche, that our experience of another's expressed emotional state will not yield any knowledge of that person's mental contents.

The analysis so far points to some marked contrasts between Nietzsche's and Schopenhauer's understandings of empathy. Put simply, for Nietzsche, empathy is about extending our imaginative capacity to simulate what others are experiencing, 'as if' we can truly overcome our individuation and experience it ourselves. Such imaginative transformation, which involves adopting another's emotional perspective, imagining how we would feel if we were them or really under those conditions, and making inferences about their emotional states, plays an essential role in ultimately evoking the phantasy of being one with others, i.e., 'the phantasy of empathy'.

As a matter of fact, Nietzsche explicitly emphasizes the role of imagination in promoting empathy and prosocial behavior when he states, 'We have to have a strong power of imagination [*eine starke Kraft der Einbildung*] to be able to feel compassion [*Mitleid*]' (HH I 59; translation slightly modified). Nietzsche seems to offer two arguments for this claim. The first one begins with the assumption that 'no amount of experience with a person, however near to us he may be, can be complete enough' (HH I 32) to provide a total appraisal [*Gesammtabschätzung*] of his emotional state. Perception and observation alone are inadequate; something in addition is required to transcend one's frame of reference and construct new meanings, something that suggests a relationship between social stimuli and our ability to engage and build rapport with another human being. Hence, Nietzsche infers that it is only through our imaginative capacities that we can move from our egocentric personal experience to intersubjective emotional participation in another's lived experience. The second one is based on the observation that most people accept life as it unfolds itself, 'precisely because each of them wills and affirms only his own life and does

not step outside himself like those exceptions do: everything outside themselves is either not noticeable at all for them or at most a faint shadow' (HH I 33). 'Thus', Nietzsche concludes, 'for the ordinary, everyday person, the value of life rests solely upon him taking himself to be more important than the world' (HH I 33). This indirectly implies that some kind of other-oriented, imaginative capacity is necessary for the enactment of self-transcending prosocial behaviors and empathic recognition of another's perspective. Otherwise, as Nietzsche notes, 'The great lack of imagination [*Der grosse Mangel an Phantasie*] from which [the individual] suffers makes him unable to empathize with [*einfühlen*] other beings, and hence he participates in their fate and suffering as little as possible' (HH I 33).¹¹

The theory of empathy Nietzsche develops in D 142 resonates well with contemporary psychological research on empathy, especially with what is generally referred to as representational or simulation theories of empathy. Despite their differences, what these theories share is the idea that empathy relies on a simulational process that attempts to reproduce another's mental state in oneself by means of one's own motivational and emotional resources (Stueber 2006, 111). This aspect of Nietzsche's theory has not been given much attention, even though some commentators have made observations similar to mine. Mattia Riccardi, for instance, distinguishes two types of simulational process behind empathy; one is a reflexive, 'human-specific mind-reading capacity' based on behavior interpretation, which I call 'representational emotional knowing', and the other is 'emotional mirroring or contagion', which we have in common with animals (2015, 229–230). However, I disagree with Riccardi on a crucial point, going further than him, and demonstrate below that representational emotional knowing is not necessarily specific to humans. For

11 Contemporary psychological studies support the hypothesis that the greater an individual's imagination, the more empathy the individual will show. See, for instance, Rabinowitz and Heinhorst (1985). In a similar vein to Nietzsche, Eva-Maria Engelen (2011) suggests that empathy 'involves adopting the perspective of the other's emotional state', which 'means that empathetic activity is always already an activity of the imagination'.

Nietzsche, human empathy must be seen in continuity with animal empathic responding. Akshay Ganesh draws a similar distinction and proposes that empathy involves a conscious process of emotional comparison in which people seek to affiliate with others who are in similar experiential situation (2017, 238). This phenomenon seems close to what I refer to throughout this paper as ‘sympathetic affection’ or ‘sympathetic agreement’. However, Ganesh does not attempt to flesh out the details of the experiences of intersubjective affiliation, or at least, not as comprehensively as I have done here.

Schopenhauer, of course, vehemently denies that such phantasy through emotional imaging or automatic emulation of others’ emotional states accompanies and stimulates compassion. He says, ‘I must censure the error ... that compassion arises from an instantaneous deception of the imagination’ (BM 147). ‘This is by no means the case’, Schopenhauer reminds us; on the contrary, we directly feel into the other’s inner experience, in the absence of any separation between us and the other (BM 147). Or, in Schopenhauer’s own words, ‘We suffer with him and hence in him; we feel his pain as his, and do not imagine that it is ours’ (BM 147). Thus, Schopenhauer contends, any appeal to our psychological capacities in order to explain compassion remains at odds with the fact that compassion, as a metaphysical phenomenon, escapes the realm of individuation altogether.

Another crucial difference between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer has to do with their views on empathy’s connection to moral motivation. For Schopenhauer, through empathy one becomes not only aware of another’s inner experiences, but also willing to help the other. For Nietzsche, however, although our capacity for empathy allows navigating complexities and fostering positive social connections with others, mental representation of others’ negative emotional states alone does not necessarily entail other-oriented concern or empathic concern for their feelings and needs. In other words, Nietzsche denies that empathy has a direct association with other-oriented concern.

The second part of the discussion in D 142 only hints at an explanation about the origins and evolutionary significance of emotion perception and

reproduction in humans. Nietzsche speculates about what might have originally facilitated empathic susceptibility. Put simply, he hypothesizes that fear was a central element in early human psychology and social relations. Humans feared other humans, especially those who are deemed to pose a potential threat or are perceived as strangers. And elsewhere Nietzsche characterizes this type of fear as a primary instinct that contributes to the emergence of an empathic curiosity about the thoughts and feelings of other people: such 'fear wants to discern who the other person is, what he can do and what he wants: to deceive oneself here would mean danger and disadvantage' (D 309). Nietzsche's theory seems to take the core function of this unique capability (i.e., *Mitempfindung*) to be at least threefold: to guide our fear responses, to meditate social relations and make it easier to cooperate, and eventually to bring in a bond of empathic concern for the well-being of others, or sympathetic affection (*sympathische Affection*) between individuals, which Nietzsche defines as 'the drive for attachment and for the care of others' (D 143).

According to Nietzsche's quasi-evolutionary account, our ability to subjectively experience and share in another's psychological state or context, which is based on a shared emotional representation of perceived action, has a long evolutionary history behind it (D 142). In D 26, Nietzsche works out the idea that humans further developed this 'bestial' skill of sensing others' experiential states and thereby deciding how to engage interpersonally. The processes transforming early social behavior and thus permitting the emergence of more mature emotions such as compassion, Nietzsche believes, involve 'a fundamental remoulding [*eine gründliche Umbildung*]' and 'adapting [*anzupassen*]' of the individual consciousness and behavior to the needs and 'general requirements [*den allgemeinen Bedürfnissen*]' of social life (D* 132). 'Everything', Nietzsche says, 'that in any way corresponds to this ... membership-building drive [i.e., social instinct] and its ancillary drives is felt to be good', and 'individual empathy and social feeling [*Mitempfindung und sociale Empfindung*] here play into one another's hands' (D* 132). But how exactly has empathy

emerged and developed? What played the key role in humans becoming more empathetic?

For Nietzsche, empathy originates in mimicry: mimicry has played a crucial role in the evolution of human sociality in providing the basis for experiencing a prototypically other-oriented pattern of responses to stimuli associated with distress in others, such as ‘the sympathetic’ and ‘generally useful social actions’ (D* 132). In D 26 (titled ‘Animals and morality’), Nietzsche singles out ‘what English researchers refer to as mimicry [*mit mimicry bezeichnen*]’ as one of the key mechanisms involved in the recognition of others’ experiential states as well as the self-regulation of emotional and behavioral responses. He writes in some detail about the role of mimicry in aiding empathy-related social functioning and facilitating a sense of cooperative social bonding. The animal, Nietzsche maintains, tends to assimilate other animals’ behavior and spontaneously monitor and rely on others’ feelings for a wide range of purposes, such as to monitor and modify its own behavior out of a ‘nose for safety’; to respond emotionally or behaviorally to a stimulus in a manner that is adaptive and contextually appropriate (e.g., many animals ‘adapt their colors to that of the environment’, or ‘many play dead or assume the shapes and colors of another animal or of sand’, etc.); to cooperatively achieve joint goals and positive outcomes efficiently (such as ‘to escape from predators and to gain advantage in capturing prey’); and ultimately to gain self-control and higher self-awareness: ‘It too observes the effect its actions have on the perceptions of other animals and from there learns to look back at itself, to take itself “objectively”; it has its degree of self-awareness’ (D 26). A key insight here is that human sociality is evolutionarily continuous with animal sociality, differing from it not in kind but only in degree: ‘the loftiest human being is elevated and refined only in the manner of his nourishment’ (D 26). Humans are sensitive and responsive to their environment and the social climate in which they operate in a wider and more sophisticated sense; yet, at bottom, they continue to share many of the same social tendencies with animals. Through the same mirroring mechanisms underlying the socially regulated behavior in animals, ‘the [human] individual

conceals himself in the ... society, or he adapts himself to princes, classes, political parties, opinions of the time or place: and for all our subtle ways of appearing happy, grateful, powerful, or in love, one can easily find the relevant animal likeness' (D 26).

The reference to 'English researchers' in D 26 indicates that Nietzsche's theory draws from and extends the important insights generated by the contemporary research of his day. Nietzsche first came into contact with evolutionary perspectives on mimicry probably through Lange's discussions of the Darwinian conception of mimicry and critical overview of the debate among the British naturalists, A. R. Wallace and A. W. Bennett, about the evolutionary origins of mimicry, whether it occurs due to natural selection. It seems Nietzsche is particularly intrigued by the phenomenon of 'protective mimicry', i.e., the animal's ability to adapt its form and color to its surroundings as a protection against its enemies (see Lange, *History of Materialism*, Vol. III, 'Mimicry', 48–51). His familiarity with these discussions gives breadth and depth to his perspective on mimicry and its effects on empathy and social behavior. We see Nietzsche in his later years drawing even further on the concept of mimicry to explore human behavior to describe how the weak strategically use their emotional mimicry skills to insidiously undermine the resilience, strength, and confidence of the strong (see TI 'Anti-Darwin'). However, in his earlier writings, Nietzsche seems to be more interested in the general function of mimicry to improve social interactions than the menace of mimicry. For Nietzsche of HH and D, mimicry's function is not limited to protection against enemies. Nietzsche proposes that animals also exhibit a basic ability to extract information from stimuli via spontaneous mimicry, or automatic 'mirroring', and often appear to have a capacity, albeit in a limited form, for 'representational emotional knowing', i.e., a capacity to represent others' emotional states and to identify and discriminate between different emotional experiences.¹² Hence Nietzsche writes, 'The animal understands

12 It has been suggested that certain forms of consolation behavior in animals are influenced by an empathic understanding of other individuals' feelings (see De Waal 2015).

all this just as well as the human being; it ... judges the movements of its enemies and friends, it learns their particularities by heart, it takes appropriate measures: it renounces battle once and for all against individuals of a certain species and also divines in the approach of many types of animals a readiness for peace and accord' (D 26).¹³ It should also not be overlooked that these passages finely illustrate Nietzsche's emphasis on the perception–action mechanisms by which animals actually engage with the world, and how such sensitivity to particular movements and patterns of movement in turn serves as a necessary condition to imitate, learn, and remember more advanced forms of social behavior in higher mammals and human beings.

For Nietzsche, our capacity to mimic and emulate socially relevant actions, sensations, and experiences has a further crucial function. Put simply, mimicry leads to a perceived similarity between self and other (or, in Nietzsche's words, 'the phantasy of empathy, a feeling of being somewhat alike'), and this in turn leads to an increased sense of interpersonal connectedness and communication, mutual liking, and the cultivation of a higher commitment to behavioral norms that are conducive to forming and sustaining caring relationships with others (HH I 98).¹⁴

13 Here Nietzsche is possibly influenced by Schopenhauer, who attributes a lower-level associative reasoning to animals on the basis that 'the knowledge of cause and effect ... is a priori inherent in animals' (WWR I 23). He says, 'all animals, even the most imperfect, have understanding, for they all know objects, and this knowledge as motive determines their movements' (WWR I 21). Yet he acknowledges that 'the degree of acuteness of [such] understanding varies a great deal ... between the different species of animals' (WWR I 23). As an example, he mentions the case of an 'elephant which, after crossing many bridges on his journey through Europe, once refused to go on one, over which he saw the rest of the party of men and horses crossing as usual, because it seemed to him too lightly built for his weight' (WWR I 23). Another 'special proof' of the manifestation of understanding in animals, Schopenhauer observes, is that 'even a quite young dog does not venture to jump from the table, however much he wants to, because he foresees the effect of the weight of his body, without, however, knowing this particular case from experience' (WWR I 23). He closes his discussion with a crucial caveat, 'in judging the understanding of animals, we must guard against ascribing to it a manifestation of instinct' (WWR I 23).

14 A large body of empirical research supports Nietzsche's contention about the pro-social effects of affective mimicry and physiological synchronization. In an experimental work

It is worth mentioning at this point that Nietzsche is quite modern in his recognition of the communicative/pro-social function of mimicking the behaviors of others, how one individual's instinctive behavior can provoke a similar behavior on the part of the other individual. In a section titled 'Gesture and speech' from *HH*, Nietzsche curiously remarks about the role of gestural and bodily expression of emotions as a significant facilitator in enabling opportunities for individuals to experience a mutual understanding and psychological attachment:

Older than speech is the mimicking of gestures, which takes place involuntarily and ... so strong that we cannot look upon facial movements without innervation of our own face (one can observe that feigned yawning evokes a natural yawning in someone who sees it). The imitated gesture led the person who was imitating back to the sensation that expressed itself in

(Maurer and Tindall 1983) focusing on the effects of mimicry on perceived empathy in counselor-patient relationship, the results indicated that when counselors mimicked the non-verbal behavior of their clients, they were perceived as expressing more empathy and concern compared to when the counselors did not mimic their clients (qtd. in Van Baaren et al. 2009, 33). In line with this work, other psychologists (Bavelas et al. 1987, 325) proposed a model of elementary mimicry as a non-verbal communicative act, which is analogous to verbal expression of ideas, thoughts, and feelings through speech and conversation. Put simply, any behavior that occurs in a social context is potentially communicative. There is always another individual in the situation when motor/affective mimicry occurs. This suggests that mimicry is not to be understood simply as non-verbal behavior, or only expressive of one's own subjective state in response to the perceived emotional experience of the other person; it is expressive to the other person as well. Specifically, it is a way of showing the one who is mimicked, 'I feel as you do', and thereby conveying fellow feeling to the other person. In a more recent experiment (Guéguen et al. 2011), in which a student-assistant mimicked or failed to mimic a participant during a discussion session about paintings, and after the event solicited the participant for a written feedback about an essay, it was found that mimicry increased compliance to the assistant's request. More specifically, mimicry served in fostering a closer relationship and was associated with greater liking of the assistant. According to the researchers, this promises an explanation of the effect of mimicry on pro-social behavior, i.e., the link between mimicry and other-oriented concern. Put simply, helping another person is a good strategy in fostering other-oriented prosocial behavior, and as the previous studies (Burger et al. 2004) indicate, we are more likely to help people we like, or people with whom we perceive ourselves to share a commonality of experiences (qtd. in Guéguen et al. 2011, 3). The research then suggests that 'if mimicry leads to more positively perceiving someone and if mimicry is interpreted as the desire of the mimicker to create affiliation and rapport, then this dual effect could explain why we help more favorably our mimicker' (Guéguen et al. 2011, 3).

the face or body of the person being imitated. Thus people learned to understand one another; thus the child still learns to understand its mother. In general, painful sensations may well have been expressed by gestures that themselves caused pain... Conversely: gestures of pleasure were themselves pleasurable and hence were easily adapted for the purposes of communicative understanding (laughter as an expression of being tickled, which is pleasurable, served for the expression of other pleasurable sensations besides). (HH I 216)¹⁵

Nietzsche views the human tendency for sociality and affiliation as involving progressively more sophisticated capacities such as understanding others' emotional and mental states, engaging with others' needs, and converting sympathy into concern and hence to pro-social behavior. He believes, just like in the case of animals, that it is the mechanisms of mimicry and imitative behavior that give rise to empathy and pro-social behavior in humans. It is crucial to note that Nietzsche's approach here encompasses both biological and social influences that underpin the development of other-oriented prosocial tendencies, and we need to determine how exactly the biological and social figure in his account. In an unpublished fragment from 1877, Nietzsche writes the following about the nature and origin of 'social instinct' or other-oriented drives:

Perhaps the unegoistic drive [*Trieb*] is a late development of the social instinct; certainly not the other way around. The social instinct [*soziale Trieb*] emerges out of the constraint that is exerted from interest for another being ... or out of fear, with its insight that we must work together so as not to perish individually. This sensation [*Empfindung*], inherited, emerges later, without the original motive becoming conscious; it has become the need that looks for the opportunity to act. (KSA 8, 23[32], my translation)

15 Here Nietzsche seems to be anticipating a version of a contemporary hypothesis about the human ability to imitate various action patterns which is simply known as 'direct mapping'. Put simply, direct mapping is based on the proposal that the observation of an action activates a corresponding motor behavior in the observer. Observed actions are automatically mapped from the visible movements of another to the perceptual and motor representations of the observer during imitation. Some psychologists such as Perra and Gattis have asserted that this hypothesis 'appears consistent with behavioral evidence that infants can selectively match the gestures of an adult model very early in life' (2008, 134).

Here Nietzsche seems to hold that social instinct is not primary, that is, the human person is not essentially or inherently social, but rather becomes social through his/her interactions with others, which enable him/her to attune to others' inner experiences, and vice versa. The instinct towards sociality and group aggregation is not something deeply grounded in human nature; rather it evolves and manifests in variable and complex ways throughout life. The passage cited above also unambiguously states that other-oriented drives are not innate, but presumptively derived from our social instinct. There are indeed several passages in HH and D that support Nietzsche's early ideas about human sociality.

In HH and D, Nietzsche places greater emphasis on the idea that good-naturedness (*Gutmüthigkeit*), which is synonymous with being other-oriented and sympathetic to others' feelings, needs, and thoughts, was in large part acquired in reaction to a specific stimulus (i.e., fear of others and circumstances). Through their perceptions and interactions with others, our ancestors began to adjust, and often suppress, their behavior when they predicted an attack or as an attempt to avoid potentially damaging conflicts and hence maximize the likelihood of survival. Many coping skills (among which, of particular importance, is an ability to accurately appraise and affectively attune to another's experience with well-meaning intentions) have been retained and socially passed on to the next generations and cultivated through cultural customs: 'Good-natured people [*Die Gutmüthigen*] have acquired their character through the constant fear, which their ancestors had, of foreign attack—they mollified, pacified, wheedled up, bowed down, diverted, flattered, cowered, hid the pain, the annoyance, smoothed back their features right away—and finally they bequeathed this whole delicate, tried and true mechanism to their children and grandchildren' (D 310). Human beings, Nietzsche claims, become good-natured mainly by means of emulation and imitation (*Nachmachen*) of others (initially one's parents) who take the initiative to demonstrate and model what is socially 'allegeable and acceptable': 'It is evident that moral feelings are transmitted through a process whereby

children perceive in their parents strong sympathies and antipathies toward certain actions and, as born apes, imitate [*nachmachen*] these inclinations and disinclinations' (D 34). In a section titled 'How seeming becomes being' from HH, Nietzsche goes even further and seems to suggest that other-oriented benevolence is to an important extent a by-product of a basic drive to imitate, and accordingly he seeks its origins in mere human imitativeness: 'The profession of almost everyone ... begins with ... a mimicking from the outside [*Nachmachen von Aussen*], with a copying [*Copiren*] of what is effective. Anyone who always wears the mask of a friendly countenance must finally acquire a power over benevolent dispositions without which the expression of friendliness cannot be compelled to appear—and finally they acquire power over him, he is benevolent' (HH I 51). In brief, for Nietzsche, human beings have innate other-oriented psychological dispositions that are relatively unsophisticated and automatic, and these must be developed and built upon through social mimicry and gestural-behavioral imitation to yield complicated and cognitively rich other-oriented psychological dispositions such as empathy and compassion.

The capacity for imitation and affective attunement is the key to human sociality and communication. Broadly construed, Nietzsche understands a 'drive to imitate' as an innate disposition to mirror others' behavioral and emotional state. He regards this drive as a precursor to developing social instinct and sympathetic affection towards others. As I see it, for Nietzsche, empathy is an acquired skill that provides an early foundation for the development of other-oriented behavioral tendencies. This interpretation comes closer to John Richardson's, according to which, social instinct is 'a drive to copy, i.e., a disposition to imitate others, to want to do the same as they do' which 'is so basic and long-standing a product of social selection that it has become a stable drive itself' (2004, 86). According to Richardson, natural selection explains our basic animal instincts and drives that are thought to be passed on through genetic inheritance. Social selection, on the other hand, explains our more peculiarly human sensibilities, which we acquire in a non-genetic way,

solely by mimicking, remembering, and internalizing the customs, norms, and behaviors of the members of a given group. The function of social selection is principally to modify and manipulate those drives and behaviors that are originally designed solely for the organism's own survival and reproduction, and to redirect them towards goals serving the overall fitness and success of the social unit. In other words, social selection through customs and social habits constantly function to oppose and suppress the drives that are inherited through natural selection (2004, 81–84). Nietzsche, Richardson points out, understands this essentially antagonistic process as the taming (*Zähmung*) or domestication (*Domestikation*) of human's animal nature (2004, 145). Richardson takes Nietzsche's claim to be that empathy and other-oriented concern evolve through the processes of socialization 'and not by natural selection', but with a crucial qualification. Natural selection continues to provide 'various antecedents' and 'raw materials' for the generation of other-oriented prosocial tendencies, which are solely in the service of social instinct to constantly broaden the range of cooperation and foster a sense of alliance or group belonging (2004, 148). Or put in Nietzsche's words, empathic concern is understood primarily to be a derivative of the 'membership-building drive and its ancillary drives' (D* 132).

Paul Katsafanas, on the other hand, expresses a firm disagreement with Richardson on this matter: 'Consider Richardson's suggestion that naturally selected drives aim at individual preservation while socially selected customs and habits aim at their own preservation (Richardson 2004, 82–84). I think Nietzsche's view is more complex. Many of our drives are inherently social' (2016, 213). Katsafanas then mentions our 'drive toward sociality' (WS 70), 'good-naturedness (*Gutmüthigkeit*)', 'friendliness', and 'politeness of the heart' (HH I 49) as examples of inherently social dispositions, which do not need to be seen to evolve under the influence of social selection. Katsafanas says, 'I cannot discern any textual basis for [Richardson's reading]. Nietzsche calls these inherently social behaviors drives (*Triebe*), and he seems to treat them as coeval with the more egoistic drives' (2016, 213). Katsafanas argues against Richardson's

contention that socialization transcends the antagonistic effects of natural selection and ultimately shapes our other-oriented dispositional characteristics. Rather, he suggests, customs and social context serve as a necessary condition for our completely innate other-oriented drives to develop and be expressed.

I disagree with Katsafanas: on Nietzsche's view, empathic concern and social bonds are not entirely rooted in natural or innate tendencies. I believe that Katsafanas fails to consider the significance of social and cultural factors that contribute to the evolution and development of empathy and other-oriented prosocial tendencies. The textual evidence suggests, *pace* Katsafanas, that empathy and our feelings of concern about the welfare of others cannot be explained in terms of innate or biological tendencies alone. My account, like those of Richardson and Katsafanas, distinguishes various psychological and social factors that are associated with empathy; yet it overcomes the weaknesses of both. Katsafanas is right to claim that, on Nietzsche's view, human beings have some natural other-oriented psychological dispositions; however, he fails to note that these are relatively unsophisticated dispositions. They do not include more complex social instincts and accompanying emotional attitudes such as empathy. For this reason, Richardson is right to deny that all other-oriented psychological dispositions are simply selected through natural selection. Yet, he goes too far in claiming that they are almost entirely the result of socialization.

To sum up what has been discussed so far, according to Nietzsche, the ways in which we synchronize with (i.e., mimic) others' somatic states, especially feeling along with others' positive emotions, play a central role in forging a sense of rapport or sympathetic relation between individuals. In other words, social instinct and other-oriented inclinations grow out of and along with intersubjective feelings of pleasure. Nietzsche further hypothesizes that the pleasant sympathetic feeling that arises out of our mutual susceptibility to one another's experiential state is predictor of other-oriented concern and motivation to help. Nietzsche's theory of empathy through mimicry and mirroring, and its corollary idea that

building a mutual understanding and psychological bonding through mimicry initially contributes to the development of fellow-feeling and other-oriented prosocial attitudes, remains an intriguing working hypothesis, but the details are murky. More specifically, Nietzsche seems able to demonstrate how empathy emerges independent of a motivational component (i.e., emphatic concern), yet he does not explain how exactly the gradual development of more mature emotions such as compassion occurs.

To further elucidate Nietzsche's theory, we can now place it in the context of his criticism of Schopenhauer. Empathy, *pace* Schopenhauer, is originally amoral; it lacks the motivational component of compassion. Empathy emerges basically as an ability to perceive the expressions of other people, which, in turn, makes it possible to evaluate how they perceive us. As emphasized above, empathy has several non-moral functions that arise along with it, especially those related to its positive role in social life, its relation to fear and adaptations to the challenges of one's environment with appropriate coping skills. Many of those behaviors and capacities are for the sake of the empathizing subject, not for the sake of another person. According to Schopenhauer, empathy can arise only from one's ability to see through (*durchsehen*) the illusory principle of individuation and recognize the metaphysical unity of all beings over the divided world of phenomena. Nietzsche outright denies that empathy requires the sort of intuitive awareness of numerical oneness Schopenhauer describes (D 142). Rather, for Nietzsche, empathy emerged in humans from a basic capacity to imitate, mirror, and represent what is different from oneself. According to Schopenhauer, it is impossible to empathize with another's experience unless it becomes at some point one's own. Nietzsche elsewhere illustrates the 'presumptuousness' of this claim in relation to a discussion about the 'delusion on the part of great actors that the historical personages they portray really felt the same as they do during their portrayal' (D 324). What these actors, whoever they are, fail to grasp is, Nietzsche observes, that 'their power of imitation and divination, which they would gladly have us believe is a clairvoyant faculty, penetrates just barely enough to capture gestures, voice tones

and looks, and what is altogether external; that is to say, they snatch the shadow of the soul of a great hero, statesman, warrior, of a person of ambition, jealousy, despair; they push in close to the soul but never into the spirit of their subject' (D 324). In empathy, we do not undergo the same token experience as the other. Clearly, we cannot directly enter into another's experiential space. Hence Nietzsche's rebuke of Schopenhauer: 'to view and take in the experiences of others as if they were our own—as is the imperative of a philosophy of compassion ... stop all your fantasizing!' (D 137). In other words, there is a naturalistic way of viewing and taking in the experiences of others—one that does not take refuge in fantastical assumptions. Having laid out the antecedents and conditions that give rise to and promote the development of other-oriented concern, I want now to leave behind the question of how empathic concern emerges and consider Nietzsche's views on its value.

3. Fellow Feeling and Sympathetic Affection

Schopenhauer claims that, during empathy, the other is no longer experienced as a separate being; empathy consists in a self-transcendent feeling of oneness, i.e., 'one individual's again recognizing in another his own self, his own true inner nature' (BM 209). In other words, empathy reveals something real to us about the world, the identity of all beings, or more specifically, the one indivisible will which is the 'in-itself' of all things. Therefore, its 'significance goes beyond the mere phenomenal appearance of things, and so also beyond all possibility of experience' (BM 200). These assumptions about the self-transcendent function of empathy and its relation to a heightened sense of fellow feeling continued to be defended after Schopenhauer. Vischer (1873), for instance, notes in a similar vein that empathy is elicited by 'a mental renunciation and dissipation of the self-feeling' (*Über das optische Formgefühl*, 29; my translation). And he claims that only because of an increased sense of self-other merging are we able to experience a sympathetic response to the perception of another's suffering: 'the empathy [*Mitempfindung*] and the fellow feeling [*Mitgefühl*] that we might have, for instance, for a wounded soldier lead to a deep emotional

participation [*einer tiefen Gemütsteilnahme*] as we expand our transposed, compassionate self [*mitleidende Ich*] into a general human self in such a way that the purity of the entire human existence appears embittered by this one image of suffering' (*Über das optische Formgefühl*, 29; my translation).

Yet, for Nietzsche, empathy does not result in the perception and experience of oneness that transcends the phenomenal boundaries of body, time, and space, and which Schopenhauer sees as facilitating moral motivation. Nietzsche speaks merely of an imagined sense of connectedness, 'the phantasy of empathy', in the sense of an emotional identification with another individual. Individuals affected by common experiences (of suffering or joy) can overcome differences in responding to those experiences. Experiencing things with similar consciousness, i.e., observing our emotional response to something mirrored in others' emotional response to that thing, can be in turn productive of a perceived sense of unity or feelings of belongingness to a group and similarity to other group members. But this sense of unity or fellow feeling does not require a sort of literal transcendence of personal boundaries.

Having touched upon Nietzsche's reflections on fellow feeling and how it can facilitate a bond of sympathetic affection, care, and strong attachment, I would like to discuss his views on the value of sympathetic affection. Nietzsche's theory of empathy in D is deeply colored by his negative assessment of sympathetic affection. Right after the section where he introduces his theory of empathy, Nietzsche launches his critique of sympathetic affection and how our inability to temper our empathic tendencies can actually undermine our own and others' physical and psychological health. The passage is worth citing at length:

Woe to us if this drive ever rages!—Supposing the drive for attachment and for the care of others (the 'sympathetic affection') were twice as strong as it is; then life on earth would be unbearable. Merely consider all the foolishness each of us commits out of attachment and care for ourselves, daily and hourly, and how insufferable we are in the process: what would it be like if we became for others the object of the same foolishness and importunities with which up until now they had only plagued themselves! Wouldn't we take blind flight the moment the next person drew near? And heap the

same imprecations on sympathetic affection that we currently heap on egotism?
(D 143)

It is important to note that the above passage should not be read as Nietzsche's rejection of empathic concern, or his final word on its value. Here Nietzsche is simply concerned to point out that our other-oriented affective dispositions should not come at the expense of neglecting the well-being of all involved. While a shortage of empathy or excessive egocentrism is regrettable, so is a surplus of empathy in the form of constant caring, benevolence, and attentiveness to others. This is why Nietzsche elsewhere says that 'Goodness and love, as the most salutary herbs and powers in human affairs, are such precious discoveries that we might well wish to proceed as economically as possible in using these balsamic remedies' (HH I 48). Being economical with our kindness and goodness is not only a prudent way to spare ourselves the psychological torment and humiliation of becoming one another's passive objects of love and benevolence, but it is also a necessity to empower ourselves with positive affirmations and serve as an inspiration for many.

This points to a crucial issue that Nietzsche wants his readers to recognize. He hypothesizes that having a sympathetic disposition is strongly positively correlated with an inability to rejoice in others' joy and stand with them in solidarity. He says people who are 'sympathetic and always helpful in misfortune are rarely as likely to share in joy: when others are fortunate, they have nothing to do, are superfluous, feel as if they no longer possess their superior position, and hence easily manifest discontent' (HH I 321). Here Nietzsche's account bears close similarities to Schopenhauer's understanding of the phenomenological aspects of sympathetic affection. For Schopenhauer, empathic distress is the core state operative in empathic concern. That is, his understanding of empathic concern is solely conditional on co-suffering, for he says: 'only another's suffering, want, danger, and helplessness awaken our sympathy directly and as such' (BM 146). Even though Nietzsche appears to agree with this assumption, his theory affords a richer and more positive account of sympathetic

affection and the motivational economy (i.e., the actual motivating forces) that is embodied in other-oriented concern. Nietzsche believes that even though other-oriented concern is triggered and unfolds primarily in situations involving someone who is suffering or in distress, we can also be motivated by pleasure to assist others who we take to be like ourselves (D 133). In other words, for Nietzsche, we are typically motivated by another's distress to help, but often (if not always) empathic concern can be elicited by a sense of likeness to another person as well as by mutual feelings of pleasure and enjoyment.

To be fair to Schopenhauer, he recognizes the pleasure involved in other-oriented concern when he says, '[i]t is true that we can take pleasure in the good fortune, well-being, and enjoyments of others' (BM 146). Yet he differs from Nietzsche on the motivating force of this experience, for he says, 'but then this [pleasure] is secondary, brought by the fact that their suffering and privation had previously distressed us' (BM 146). Here Schopenhauer's reasoning depends on a particular phenomenological story, according to which suffering is the positive, essential element of life, something that 'automatically makes itself known', thus more likely to serve as an immediate motivation for action, whereas satisfaction and pleasure are regarded negatively, as 'the mere elimination of [suffering]' (BM 146). Thus, the pleasure felt when we act out of sympathetic affection is taken to be merely epiphenomenal (i.e., an inefficacious by-product) and by itself it cannot move us to action; empathic concern arises only out of one's susceptibility or willingness to be exposed to another's suffering.

Although Nietzsche endorses Schopenhauer's general claim that suffering is essential to life, he rejects Schopenhauer's negative conception of pleasure (specifically his dismissal of pleasure as a potential motivational determinant of sympathetic affection). With this in mind, I would like to finally turn back to the Nietzsche of HH, who offers a different, and more positive, assessment of the value of sympathetic affection. In HH, Nietzsche seeks to argue that joy or an expectation of pleasure is causally efficacious in motivating empathic concern. He also contends that only

when we take our capacity for joy to its fullest expression through influencing, shaping, and taking satisfaction from others' achievement, advancement, and happiness, do we embody genuine concern for others: 'one that has a rich capacity to share in the joys of others, wins friends everywhere, feels affection for all that is growing and becoming, shares the pleasure of others in all their honors and successes' (HH I 614). For Nietzsche, the best way to promote human flourishing and meaning in life is through mutually fulfilling, uplifting, and inspiring connections with others, and especially in tandem with a capacity for shared joy. He makes this point more sharply in the unpublished fragments from the period of HH II. He emphasizes, for instance, that we should 'rejoice in such a way that our joy is useful to others' (UFHH 42 [31]). More specifically, we should 'have joy in one another, up to the point where one promotes the other's direction' (UFHH 27 [95]). Nietzsche describes his vision of sympathetic affection in terms of self-growth and solidarity among individuals: 'Friends, we take joy in one another as in fresh growth of nature and have regard for one another: thus we grow beside one another like trees, and precisely for that reason stretched upward and straight, because we extend ourselves by means of one another' (UFHH 31 [9]). In the final analysis, Nietzsche offers a more nuanced perspective, according to which it is not a general sensitivity to suffering per se (i.e., one's ability to recognize distress in others and experience sadness in response), but a capacity to celebrate another's overcoming of struggles, to delight in the joy of their happiness and achievements that leads to genuine empathic concern.

4. Concluding Remarks

My objective in this paper has been to reconstruct Nietzsche's psychological views on empathy as well as trace the history of certain ideas and possible lines of influence on Nietzsche's thought. My analysis shows three things. First, what seems most characteristic of Nietzsche of HH and D is his proactive disregard for metaphysical ideas and the faith in naturalistic

explanation of phenomena, especially of human moral experience, and the way in which Nietzsche always tries to substantiate his explanations with relevant evidence and critical reflection in the scientific spirit of truth-seeking.

Second, as I mentioned above, Nietzsche's account does not fully explain the relationship between empathy and sympathy or the emergence of more mature sympathetic affects such as compassion to others. I speculate the reason to this is that Nietzsche believed that he found support for his ideas in scientific literature of his time about the affective mechanisms underlying empathic arousal, and therefore he did not see the need for further inquiry. We know that Nietzsche sifted through the psychological literature of his time carefully and presumably drew the most decisive support for his theory of empathy from the French physician Charles Féré's *Sensation et mouvement: études expérimentales de psycho-mécanique* (*Sensation and movement: experimental studies of psycho-mechanics*, 1887).¹⁶ Spurred by his readings of Féré, Nietzsche later made the following remark about the connection between empathy and sympathy: 'Empathy with the souls of others [*Das Sichhineinleben in andere Seelen*] is originally nothing moral [*ursprünglich nichts Moralisches*], but a physiological susceptibility to suggestion: "sympathy" ... is merely a product of that psychomotor rapport which is reckoned a part of spirituality (*induction psycho-motrice*, Charles Féré thinks)' (Nachlass 1888, 14 [119]). 'Psychomotor induction' (*induction psycho-motrice*), a term Nietzsche appropriates from Féré, is meant to describe a basic tendency to imitate observed actions.¹⁷ The same underlying mechanisms of empathy that Nietzsche describes in D 142 are essential for Féré as well, especially an automatic ability to monitor another's behavior and adapt one's own according to its effect. Féré suggests that the ways in which we synchronize with (i.e., mimic) others' somatic states, especially feeling along with others'

16 Brobjer cites Féré as one of the chief influences on Nietzsche's physiologically laden discourses in the late 1880s ('Nietzsche's Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science: An Overview', 45). To my knowledge, no commentator has ever analyzed the parallels between Nietzsche's and Féré's views on empathy and sympathy.

17 For Féré's own description of this phenomenon, see *Sensation et mouvement*, 15–16.

positive emotions, play a central role in forging a sense of rapport or sympathetic relation between individuals. He also contends that our other-oriented prosocial tendencies ‘can be explained physiologically’, simply by appealing to our susceptibility to the phenomenon of psychomotor induction, or our spontaneous social use of imitation. An attempt at such explanation is to be found in his *Sensation et mouvement*: ‘Reciprocal induction multiplies emotion; that is what we often see in assemblies. The expression of pleasure, painted on another face, increases our own pleasure; from which it follows that one has interest in provoking the pleasure of the other to increase one’s own’ (*Sensation et mouvement*, 16–17, my translation). In other words, the pleasant sympathetic feeling that arises out of our mutual susceptibility to one another’s experiential state is predictor of a deeper sense of concern and care for the other (i.e., what Nietzsche calls ‘sympathetic affection’). In a similar vein, Nietzsche states that it is integral to the ‘feelings of sympathy [*den mitleidenden Empfindungen*]’ that ‘by doing as one pleases, one person gives pleasure to another’ (D 76). Féré goes further and highlights, in a quite Nietzschean fashion, the role of pleasure in being useful to others and satisfaction of doing good as a major determinant of the occurrence of sympathetic affection.¹⁸ He writes: ‘to be useful to others ... is pleasant in itself; it is better to give than to receive. Some individuals show a strong preference for those who consent to seek services from them; they have gratitude to those who give them the opportunity to give’ (*Sensation et mouvement*, 70, my translation). Again, this aptly echoes Nietzsche’s remark that social instinct and other-oriented inclinations grow out of and along with intersubjective feelings of pleasure (HH I 98), or that ‘the happiness and at the same time the sacrifice of the individual lies in feeling himself to be a useful member and instrument of the whole’ (D 132).

18 It should be noted, however, that pleasure plays a much smaller role starting in *The Gay Science*.

Third, it seems interesting as a future direction of research to explore further, based on what has been argued in this paper, the methodological continuity between HH, D, and Nietzsche's later, more familiar works. Nietzsche's arguments in HH and D rely on a naturalistic framework in which the only way that we can know anything meaningful about human nature is via observation and empirical investigation. He criticizes metaphysical theories that trace the origin of moral sensations beyond the phenomenal, to an in-itself that is apart from our observation. Later on, he radically extends this naturalistic analysis to the study of the history of moral concepts and their influence on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of people. For instance, in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche goes to great lengths to illuminate the social and psychological origins of non-moral concepts such as debt and purity and show how they are later transfigured into moral concepts, such as guilt and 'bad consciousness'.¹⁹

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