



Reconsidering the Role of Empathy in Hannah Arendt's Concept of
Enlarged Mentality

by

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Abstract

Hannah Arendt based her political philosophy upon Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment rather than his political or moral philosophies. Arendt argued that the social nature of Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment was absent from his moral philosophy. For Arendt, sociability was the quintessential characteristic of human nature. Consequently, Arendt argued that political judgments were accomplished by representing others' perspectives through the faculty of imagination, a process that she described (following Kant) as enlarging one's mentality. Counter-intuitively, Arendt maintained that enlarged mentality was not empathy.

In this thesis, rather than focusing on Arendt's theory of political judgment, I focus on the phenomenological underpinnings underlying Arendt's notion of enlarged mentality and argue that enlarged mentality in fact depends upon a form of empathy that stems from embodiment phenomenology, i.e., the work of phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Edith Stein. I hypothesize that if Arendt were privy to this more elaborate definition of empathy, Arendt would have agreed that enlarged mentality depends upon this form of empathy that I will develop in this thesis.

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Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

According to Hannah Arendt, when we make political judgments we do so by taking the judgments of others into account: “I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is I represent them” (“Truth and Politics” 241). Yet, Arendt denies that this procedure is empathy (“Truth and Politics” 241). Arendt may deny that enlarged mentality is a form of empathy because she does not want to confuse the cognitive structures of empathy with the operation of the faculty of the imagination in occurrent acts of empathy. While the ontological conditions of empathy are also necessary ontological conditions of enlarged mentality, they do not provide sufficient conditions for the achievement of enlarged thinking.¹ Nevertheless, contemporary theorists, such as George Kateb, question the relationship between empathy and enlarged mentality in Arendt. Unlike Arendt, Kateb says that, “...empathy helps further to enlarge enlarged mentality” (135). Like Kateb, I also believe the relationship between empathy and enlarged mentality is more complex than Arendt had originally conceived. In order to demonstrate this connection, I will develop a theory of human subjectivity based upon embodiment phenomenology’s conception of empathy.

In this thesis I will explore the phenomenological underpinnings of Arendt’s theory of enlarged mentality, and argue that in fact enlarged mentality relies upon a certain form of empathy. In the first chapter of the thesis, I discuss the key concepts of Arendt’s theory: *sensus communis*, enlarged mentality, actor/spectator, impartiality, and going visiting. For the most part, Arendt uses these concepts in order to develop a

¹ I must thank Walter Okshevsky for this observation.

political philosophy based on Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment, which Arendt describes as Kant's "unwritten" political philosophy. In order to understand the basis of Arendt's fundamental concepts for a political philosophy, I devote attention in this chapter to explaining how she conceived of Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment.

The second chapter outlines the theory of empathy that I will later argue is essential to Arendt's concept of enlarged mentality. This theory of empathy has its roots in phenomenology, specifically embodiment phenomenology, which is the position of such philosophers as Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, and Merleau-Ponty, as well as contemporary embodiment phenomenologists such as James Mensch, Dan Zahavi, and Evan Thompson.

In the third chapter I demonstrate that the key concepts of Arendt's theory of enlarged mentality rely upon embodied phenomenology, and in turn, that enlarged mentality relies upon the more elaborate theory of empathy that I describe in my second chapter.

1.1 Arendt on Kant's Aesthetic Judgment: a Note on Translation

In attempting to understand Arendt's theory of political judgment, it is important that we appreciate Arendt's understanding of Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment rather than simply focusing on the task of grasping Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment in itself. There are a number of Arendt commentators (e.g., Seyla Benhabib, Ronald Beiner, Richard Bernstein, and George Kateb) who point to the controversial nature of Arendt's interpretation of Kant's work, especially on Kant's "unwritten" political philosophy. The majority of commentators believe that Kant's political philosophy, along with his moral

philosophy, is based upon practical reason, not judgment. For example, according to Richard Bernstein, “Arendt well knew that, even though she invokes the name of Kant, she was radically departing from Kant” (232). In addition, according to Maurizio d’Entrèves,

...Arendt based her theory of political judgment on Kant’s aesthetics rather than on his moral philosophy. At first this might seem a puzzling choice, since Kant himself based his moral and political philosophy on practical reason and not on our aesthetic faculties (112).

However, it is not my purpose in this paper to question Arendt’s interpretation of Kant’s work. In this thesis, I want to focus upon the substance of the views regarding political judgment that Arendt developed from her interpretation of Kant’s theory of aesthetic judgment, while acknowledging that controversy exists over the accuracy of that interpretation. Nevertheless, Arendt takes Kant’s theory of aesthetic judgments to be his “unwritten” political philosophy.

According to Arendt, what is characteristic of politics is the plurality of opinions among actors. It is here that one finds the quintessential reason why Arendt believed Kant’s “unwritten” political philosophy is in his third critique, *The Critique of Judgment* and not in his moral philosophy. According to Arendt,

The most decisive difference between the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment* is that the moral laws of the former are valid for all intelligible beings, whereas the rules of the latter are strictly limited in their validity to human beings on earth (*Lectures* 13).

What Arendt means by this statement is that Kant’s moral philosophy, which is represented by the *Critique of Practical Reason*, can be discovered by individuals through the faculty of practical reason. For example, according to Kant, in a moral matter one can discover the correct moral response through one’s faculty of reason

independently of others. If the person is correct in his or her reasoning and he or she abided by the Categorical Imperative, then this person does not have to consult others for validation of decisions in moral matters (Kant *Morals*).

On the other hand, matters of judgment do not follow a strict rule-based process.

According to Arendt,

...the first part of the *Critique of Judgment* deals with objects of judgment properly speaking, such as an object that we call “beautiful” without being able to subsume it under a general category of Beauty as such; we have no rule that could be applied. (If you say, “What a beautiful rose!” you do not arrive at this judgment by first saying, “All roses are beautiful, this flower is a rose, hence this rose is beautiful.” Or conversely, “Beauty is roses, this flower is a rose, hence, it is beautiful”) (*Lectures 13-14*).

Arendt develops this further when she says,

For judgment of the particular – *This* is beautiful, *This* is ugly; *This* is right, *This* is wrong – has no place in Kant’s moral philosophy. Judgment is not practical reason; practical reason ‘reasons’ and tells me what to do and what not to do; it lays down the law and is identical with the will, and the will utters commands; it speaks in imperatives. Judgment, on the contrary, arises from “a merely contemplative pleasure or inactive delight.” This “feeling of contemplative pleasure is called taste,” and the *Critique of Judgment* was originally called Critique of Taste (*Lectures 15*).

However, although aesthetic judgments are not made through a rigid rule based procedure, it does not necessarily follow that aesthetic judgments are purely subjective. For example, if we return to Arendt’s example of the beautiful rose, when we say “What a beautiful rose,” we do not mean to say solely that “This is a beautiful rose to me,” implying that it is only beautiful to me and it ‘might’ be beautiful to you as well. Instead, when we say “What a beautiful rose,” we are making a universal claim insofar as we assert that this rose is not only beautiful to the individual, but for all others who view it as well.

It is here, with the ‘common sense’, that judgments have their social character. I will first explore Arendt’s notion of common sense derived from the Latin term, *sensus communis*, and then I will explore what follows from our *sensus communis*, namely, enlarged mentality.

1.2 *Sensus Communis*

Common sense, or *sensus communis*, is a technical term Arendt borrows from Kant. It is not to be confused with the everyday usage of the term common sense, which generally refers to a characteristic such as practicality, level-headedness, and so on. Rather, Kant and Arendt use the term in its Latin etymology, namely, *sensus communis*. In its Latin form, *sensus* can be roughly translated as “sense, sensation; feeling, attitude; judgment, perception, understanding; sense, meaning of words, etc.; a sentence” (Wheelock 131). *Communis* can be translated as

...shared, common, universal, public; 'loca', public places; 'loci', commonplaces; of persons, approachable, affable. N. as subst. commune, common property, esp. in plur.; state, commonwealth; 'in commune', for the public good, also in general. Adv. communiter, jointly, generally (Wheelock 131).

For the purpose of this paper, I suggest that instead of referring to *sensus communis* as common sense, we should take inspiration from the Latin roots of the phrase and refer to it as a “shared or common understanding”. One can see from the range of definitions above that this is not the only interpretation of the Latin terms; however, I believe it is the best way to understand how Arendt wants to use the term, especially in regards to political judgments. For the remainder of this chapter, I will refer

to the original Latin phrase, but for a proper understanding of the phrase, I suggest using my preferred translation of “shared or common understanding”.

For Arendt, the *sensus communis* is the basis for communication and without the *sensus communis* we would lose our ‘sanity’. Arendt expresses this idea in both *The Human Condition* and *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*. First, Arendt describes the *sensus communis* in *The Human Condition* as,

The only character of the world by which to gauge its reality is its being common to us all, and common sense occupies such a high rank in the hierarchy of political qualities because it is the one sense that fits into reality as a whole our five strictly individual senses and the strictly particular data they perceive. It is by virtue of common sense that the other sense perceptions are known to disclose reality and are not merely felt as irritations of our nerves or resistance sensations of our body. A noticeable decrease in common sense in any given community and a noticeable increase in superstition and gullibility are therefore almost infallible signs of alienation from the world (208-209).

Arendt, in *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, states that this notion is found in Kant’s work as well.

Kant, quite in the same vein, remarks in his *Anthropology* that insanity consists in having lost this common sense that enables us to judge as spectators; and the opposite of it is a *sensus privatus*, a private sense,...implying that our logical faculty, the faculty that enables us to draw conclusions from premises, could indeed function without communication – except that then, namely, if insanity has caused the loss of common sense, it would lead to insane results precisely because it has separated itself from the experience that can be valid and validated only in the presence of others (64).

Arendt is essentially arguing that although we have private sense data, which comes to us via our five physical senses, we would not be able to make sense of these sensations without the presence of others to validate our perceptions. For the most part, this is exactly how we make sense of reality. For example, if a number of people are together and one person thinks he or she sees something in the distance, say a dog or a

cat, this person will ask the others in this group if they had in fact seen the same object to validate what he or she has seen in the distance. If the remainder of the group testifies that they have not seen this object, then the individual may state that his or her experience was a hallucination or a mistake in his or her visual experience.

However, Kant asserts that we do not seek validation for aesthetic judgments socially (*Judgment*). When one makes an aesthetic judgment such as “This is beautiful,” and another observer says “That is ugly,” one never questions whether one is correct in his or her judgment. One would never say “Maybe I am wrong and this thing really is ugly.” Rather, one would say something like “Of course this thing is beautiful.” Therefore, aesthetic judgments have a universality quality. Natalie Oman expresses this sense of the universality of an aesthetic judgment such as a judgment of beauty by arguing that our subjective experience is that all people *ought* to judge this object as beautiful as well. According to Oman,

...a judgment of taste claims that everyone *ought* to give his or her approval to the beautiful object because of a subjective principle which Kant regards as ‘a common sense’ and not because of a theoretical objective necessity... Thus, a judgment of taste takes on the character of an objectively universal judgment except insofar as we do not claim an unconditioned necessity for the judgment, but only claim that everyone *ought* to give their assent (4).

The point Arendt is trying to make, and that I am trying to illustrate with my examples, is that judgments are essentially social. This is not only true of judgments, but, as Arendt says, of our nature as human beings. “...the ‘sociability’ of man, that is the fact that no man can live alone, that men are interdependent not merely in their needs and cares but in their highest faculty, the human mind, which will not function outside of

human society” (*Lectures* 10). This idea of sociability underlies what Arendt believes is characteristic of political judgments.² As d’Entrèves comments,

Political opinions, she [Arendt] claimed, can never be formed in private; rather, they are formed, tested, and enlarged within a public context of argumentation and debate. Public debate and discussion is indeed crucial to the formation of opinions that can claim more than subjective validity; individuals may hold personal opinions on many subject matters, but they can form representative opinions only by testing and purifying their views through a process of democratic debate and enlightenment (13).

Arendt herself says in her *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* that “...when one judges, one judges as a member of a community” (72). However, I believe there is a problem with this statement. How can an individual member of a community speak on behalf of the entire community? Arendt’s solution to this problem is her distinction between the actor and the spectator.

1.3 The Actor and the Spectator

When one judges as a member of a community, the goal one wants to achieve, according to Arendt, is *impartiality* (*Lectures* 42). Impartiality is crucial for Arendt when it comes to making judgments, especially within a political context. The easiest way to understand Arendt’s concern is to look at the contemporary political philosophical problem of making judgments within a multicultural society. For example, if culture A has value X, which is in direct contradiction to culture B’s value Y, then how are these two cultures supposed to interact with one another while sharing the same community? If each culture’s members do not take into account the views of the other culture’s members, which Arendt calls being biased, then this inability to accommodate opposing

² In addition, it will be shown later in this chapter that this idea of sociability will underlie her concept of enlarged mentality.

perspectives has a strong chance of resulting in a conflict of values between members of these two cultures that inhabit the same geographical area. Examples of such conflicts are ubiquitous. One infamous example of such conflict was the tension generated by the work of the cartoonists who depicted the prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on September 30, 2005 and Muslims who believe it is blasphemous to portray the prophet Muhammad in any form. People who support the publication of the cartoon argue for the right of free speech while those against the publication of the cartoon cite an interpretation of the Koran which suggests it is wrong to depict Muhammad. The conflict grew due to each side's incompatible perspectives.

Given Arendt's concern with bias and impartiality, this may give us some insight as to why she viewed Kant's theory of aesthetic judgments as his 'unwritten' political philosophy. One problem Arendt saw with Kant's moral philosophy was its solipsistic [my term] nature. According to Arendt,

In the center of Kant's moral philosophy stands the individual; in the center of his philosophy of history (or, rather his philosophy of nature) stands the perpetual progress of the human race, or mankind. (Therefore: History from a general viewpoint). The general viewpoint or standpoint is occupied, rather, by the spectator, who is a 'world citizen' or, rather, a 'world spectator'. It is he who decides, by having an idea of the whole, whether, in any single, particular event, progress is being made (*Lectures* 58).

This is where Arendt makes her distinction between the 'actor' and the 'spectator'. According to Arendt,

...the spectator occupies a position that enables him to see the whole; the actor, because he is part of the play, must enact his part – he is partial by definition. The spectator is impartial by definition – no part is assigned to him. Hence, withdrawal from direct involvement to a standpoint outside the game is a condition *sine qua non* of all judgment (*Lectures* 55).

Arendt then refers to Plato to argue further that the spectator is indeed in a better position to judge than the actor. Arendt appeals to Plato's example of the cave and his divided line of knowledge. Briefly, Plato divides knowledge into a hierarchy of levels; he believed the lowest level were illusions or mere appearances and the highest constituted was knowledge. Plato defines these two extreme levels as *doxa* or opinion (the lowest level) and *episteme* or knowledge (the highest level). In his example of the cave, the slaves who are chained at the base of the cave can only see shadows and assume that the shadows are the real objects. It is only when these slaves move away from the level of appearances, leaving their current perspective to turn and see true reality that the slaves will reach *episteme* (Plato *The Republic*). Arendt uses Plato's example of the cave to further support her prioritization of the spectator over the actor. She links the actor with those who only have *doxa* and the spectator with those who possess *episteme*.

...what the actor is concerned with is *doxa*, fame – that is, the opinion of others (the word *doxa* means both 'fame' and 'opinion')...the actor is dependent on the opinion of the spectator; he is not autonomous (in Kant's language); he does not conduct himself according to an innate voice of reason but in accordance with what spectators would expect of him. The standard is the spectator. And this standard is autonomous...Here one escapes from the cave of opinions altogether and goes hunting for truth – no longer the truth of the games in the festival but the truth of things that are everlasting, that cannot be different from what they are (all human affairs can be different from they actually are) and therefore are necessary (*Lectures 55*).

But how is the spectator able to achieve this 'general standpoint'?

1.4 Enlarged Mentality

We achieve the general standpoint through what Arendt calls 'enlarged thought' or 'enlarged mentality'. Enlarged mentality is yet another term Arendt borrows from

Kant's philosophy and it is essentially "...the notion that one can 'enlarge' one's own thought so as to take into account the thoughts of others" (*Lectures 43*).

'Enlarged thought' is the result of first "abstracting from the limitations which contingently attach to our own judgment," of disregarding its "subjective private conditions...by which so many are limited," that is, disregarding what we usually call self-interest, which, according to Kant, is not enlightened or capable of enlightenment but is in fact limiting. The greater the reach – the larger the realm in which the enlightened individual is able to move from standpoint to standpoint – the more 'general' will be his thinking (*Lectures 43*).

Arendt says that enlarged mentality is accomplished by "...“comparing our judgment with the possible rather than the actual judgments of others, and by putting ourselves in the place of any other man.” The faculty that makes this possible is called imagination" (*Lectures 43*). Enlarged mentality is the collection of standpoints we imaginatively represent to ourselves whenever we make a judgment in order to escape the prejudices of the actor in order to reach the standpoint of the spectator. Arendt characterizes the method of enlarged thinking as 'going visiting'. According to Arendt, "To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go *visiting* [my italics]" (*Lectures 43*).

Arendt's concept of going visiting is discussed in great detail by Lisa Disch. Disch characterizes going visiting as describing "...the work that the imagination does in an act of judgment" (157). Disch also draws attention to a difference between Kant's and Arendt's account of imagination.

In Kant's account, the imagination establishes the critical distance that makes it possible to assume a general standpoint. But for Arendt, this reflective or representative function is only one aspect of the work of the imagination. There is also a bridging function that makes present others perspectives for the purpose of going visiting (157).

Disch goes on to quote Arendt who discusses this bridging aspect in further detail:

Only imagination is capable of what we know as “putting things in their proper distance” and which actually means that we should be strong enough to remove those which are too close until we can see and understand them *without bias and prejudice*, strong enough to bridge the abysses of remoteness until we can *see and understand* those that are too far away *as though they were our own affairs*. This removing some things and bridging the abysses to others is part of the interminable dialogue for whose purposes direct experience establishes too immediate and too close a contact and mere knowledge erects an artificial barrier (qtd. in Disch 157).

Unexpectedly, however, Arendt goes on to claim that enlarged mentality is not empathy. In fact, Arendt is adamant in stating that enlarged mentality is not empathy. She says this in a number of texts. In her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Arendt says, “The trick of critical thinking [enlarged mentality] does not consist in enormously enlarged empathy through which one can know what actually goes on in the mind of all others” (*Lectures* 43). In her article “Truth and Politics”, Arendt describes why this representation of other’s standpoints does not constitute a theory of empathy.

I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or to feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not. The more people’s standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion (241).

Arendt's work in political philosophy, especially her work on enlarged mentality and judgment was not only influential during Arendt's time, but has also influenced the work of many contemporary philosophers.

1.5 Benhabib & Young

Seyla Benhabib, a contemporary political and ethical philosopher, argues against the dominant moral theories of Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls. Habermasian discourse ethics for example has set up a dichotomy within ethical/political discourse that separates concepts such as justice and concepts such as the Aristotelian 'good life'. According to Benhabib, however, we should "...reconsider, revise, and perhaps reject the dichotomies between justice versus the good life, interests versus needs, norms versus values upon which the discourse model, upon Habermas' interpretation of it, rests" (170). Benhabib's proposed solution is what she refers to as 'interactive universalism'. Benhabib believes the key difference between her interactive universalism and the discursive model is that both Rawls and Habermas rely upon, what Benhabib characterizes as, the 'generalized other'.³ Instead, Benhabib insists that we must conceive of others as concrete, and during moral discourse with the concrete other, we reverse positions with the other. It is in Benhabib's emphasis on the reversibility of perspectives that she draws upon Arendt's notion of enlarged mentality that states the moral perspectives of others are reversible.

Although Benhabib disagrees with Arendt's distinction between political and moral judgments, Benhabib does use Arendt's notion of enlarged mentality to describe moral judgments (141). According to Benhabib, what is characteristic of moral

³ Benhabib's notion of the 'generalized other' and the 'concrete other' will be explained in full detail in the last chapter.

judgments is that they are inescapable as an aspect of the human condition. Moral judgment is what we ‘always already’ exercise in virtue of being immersed in a network of human relationships that constitute our life together (Benhabib 125). Moral judgments, then, are made through moral respect between self and other through ‘symmetrical reciprocity’, which entails that the perspectives of self and other are reversible.

Conversely, in her article, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity”, Young argues against ethical theories that insist one adopt the perspective of the other in order to make moral judgments. Young argues that assumed symmetry between perspectives of self and other impedes that project. As Young states, “It is neither possible nor morally desirable for persons engaged in moral interaction to adopt one another’s standpoint” (39).

Instead of a theory of *symmetrical reciprocity*, Young develops a theory of *asymmetrical reciprocity* which holds that a

...communicative ethics should develop an account of the non-substitutable relation of moral subjects. Each participant in a communication situation is distinguished by a particular history and social position that makes their relation asymmetrical...A communicative theory of moral respect should distinguish between taking the perspective of the other people into account, on the one hand, and imaginatively taking their positions, on the other hand” (40).

Young characterizes Benhabib’s interpretation of Arendt’s notion of “enlarged mentality” as we ‘owe moral respect’ to the other’s perspective or standpoint, and for a person to acknowledge others to be as valuable as one’s self means that both positions are ‘symmetrical and reversible’. When this is applied to judgment, specifically moral judgment, Benhabib takes Arendt’s notion of ‘enlarged mentality’ and uses it to reflect on “the basis of the contextualized narratives of moral subjects” (40). When this is done, we are able to recognize the needs and interests of all parties equally; only when this is done

can we make judgments. Through 'enlarged mentality' we are able to imaginatively represent the point of view of the other.

Young quotes Benhabib:

The enlarged thought of moral judgment requires for its successful exercise the ability to take the standpoint of the other... The more perspectives we are able to present to ourselves, all the more we are likely to appreciate the possible act-descriptions through which others will identify needs. Finally, the more we are able to think from the perspective of others, all the more can we make vivid to ourselves the narrative histories of others involved (qtd. in Young 40).

Young has three arguments against symmetrical reciprocity. First, Young states that this idea of symmetry in our relation obscures the difference and particularity of the other's position. Symmetry suggests that people are able to understand one another's perspectives because we are all similar; we are able to see ourselves "reflected in the other people and find that they see themselves reflected in us" (Young 44). Young says this is a conceptual projection of sameness among people at the expense of their differences. We each have our different life-stories, or narratives, emotional habits, and so on, that make our positions irreversible (Young 45).

Second, it is ontologically impossible for people in one social position to adopt the perspective of those in another social position. To recognize the other as other and self as self means: "...she is an 'I' to herself as I am an 'I' to myself and that I am an 'other' to her just as she is an 'other' to me (Young 46). According to Young, however,

This relation of self and other is asymmetrical and irreversible, even though it is reciprocal. The reciprocal recognition by which I know that I am other for you just as you are other for me cannot entail a reversibility of perspectives precisely because our positions are partly constituted by the perspectives each of us has on the others (46-47).

Finally, taking the perspective of the other, for Young, can have “politically undesirable consequences” (44). Young points out that when people try to put themselves in the position of others, “they often put *themselves*, with their own particular experiences and privileges,” in the positions of the person in which they are trying to represent in this enlarged mentality (48). Young goes on to say, “When privileged people put themselves in the position of those who are less privileged, the assumptions derived from their privilege often allow them unknowingly to misrepresent the other’s situation” (48).

In other words, sometimes when people try to represent another’s standpoint characterized as symmetrical reciprocity the standpoint is ‘tainted’ by the original standpoint. For example, Joe is a businessman who works for a corporation in downtown Toronto and Bob is a homeless teenager also from Toronto. If Joe tried to exchange perspectives, which is characteristic of symmetrical reciprocity, in order to achieve a better understanding of Bob’s life, according to Young, then what is likely to happen is that Joe may not be completely open to Bob’s situation. Joe will likely try to judge Bob as if Bob had the same expectations and goals as Joe, assuming that for some reason Bob has done something wrong in his life to put him in this homeless position. Joe may not be open to hearing Bob’s life story in order to find out more about Bob and listening to Bob tell him why or how he is in the situation he is in.

Young’s positive account of asymmetrical reciprocity entails understanding the other by listening to her or him: this is Young’s notion of moral humility

Her descriptions of her life and the relation of her physical situation to the social possibilities available to her will point out aspects of her situation that I would not have thought of without her explanation. In this way I come to an understanding of her point of view (53).

I believe that Benhabib would respond to Young's interpretation of her work by saying Young seems to think Benhabib is advocating a form of empathy to understand the perspective of the other in enlarged mentality. However, according to Benhabib,

Such capacity for judgment is not empathy, as Arendt also observes, for it does not mean emotionally assuming or accepting the point of view of the other. It means merely making present to oneself what the perspectives of others involved are or could be and whether I could 'woo their consent' in acting the way I do... To 'think from the perspective of everyone else' is to know 'how to listen' to what the other is saying, or when the voices of others are absent, to imagine to oneself a conversation with the other as my dialogue partner. 'Enlarged thought' [mentality] is best realized through a dialogic or discursive ethic' (137).

In the following chapter, I will argue that enlarged mentality relies upon a form of empathy and I will attempt to ground this claim by developing a theory of subjectivity and its relationship to empathy. Many of ethical theories do not provide a detailed phenomenological description of human subjectivity and how it relates to their respective ethical theories. Seyla Benhabib, for example, argues that we assume the position of the concrete other without providing the phenomenological grounding necessary to establish the concrete other. In order that I do not follow suit, I will devote my attention to grounding this theory of empathy in human subjectivity. In grounding this theory of empathy in the human condition, I will demonstrate how this theory of empathy is essential to Arendt's notion of enlarged mentality.

This section will address empathy's relationship to consciousness. Although I agree with Benhabib's and Young's insistence on the importance of the other's narrative in order to understand the other; however, this will be seen as the first hint of a theory based on empathy. If we focus on someone's narrative, then we must also focus on his or

her emotional state⁴. For emotions, as I will argue, aid in our decision making processes. Therefore, to understand why one person makes the decisions that she or her does, one must understand the emotional processes that aid this person in her or his decision-making processes. In order to accomplish this task in the paper, I will now discuss the work of Antonio Damasio.

⁴ It is generally assumed, as is hinted at by Arendt's definition of empathy, that empathy is the sharing of an emotional state as another person. Although, the definition I later expose differs from this definition, it is important nevertheless to discuss how important emotions can be in a theory of empathy.

Chapter Two

2.1 Reason & Emotions

Throughout the history of western philosophy, the distinguishing feature of human beings has often been thought to be rationality. But what is the relation between emotions and reason? Some philosophers argue that the emotions inhibit reason and we can only be rational if we suppress or eliminate our emotions. This is explicit in Plato's works. Specifically, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato uses a metaphor of a chariot to portray the soul's tripartite nature. Plato compares the tripartite nature of the soul, which he describes in *The Republic* consisting in reason, spirit, and emotion (*The Republic* 441e — 442b), to that of a charioteer and two horses (*Phaedrus* 246a). Plato uses this analogy to describe how the black horse (which symbolizes the emotions) tries to steer the soul astray while the charioteer (which symbolizes reason) steers the chariot in the right direction. In this metaphor, we see that emotions and reason are at odds with one another and that reason must control the emotions in some way.

Plato's sentiment can also be found in the Stoics' attitude towards the emotions. Where Plato believed emotions impede reason and that the charioteer steers the emotions towards the truth, some interpreters hold that the Stoics took a more radical position. Commentators such as Tad Brennan suggest that instead of simply learning to control emotions, the Stoics opted for the elimination of emotions.⁵ Although there are contemporary researchers who adopt a Neo-Stoic perspective in the philosophy of the

⁵As Tad Brennan comments, "we all know roughly what it means to be stoical or stoic...Being stoic means being unemotional, indifferent to pleasure and pain, resigned to fate" (3). Brennan also addresses the debate within Stoic philosophy about Stoics merely concealed their emotional state or whether the Stoics simply did not have emotional experiences. Brennan states, rather poetically, "But what about the idea that Stoics simply don't have emotions – not that they conceal or repress them, or exaggerate some to subdue others, but that they simply don't feel any? This Stoic is no hypocrite; the reason that he [the Stoic] neither winced nor cried aloud is that it simply didn't hurt" (6). Therefore, Brennan aligns himself with the camp that believes that the Stoics eliminated the emotions to the point where they no longer experienced emotions.

emotions, e.g., Martha Nussbaum (2004), there are, however, many other researchers who question the relationship between reason and emotion. Specifically, I will appeal to the work of Antonio Damasio, a neurophysiologist, who suggests that research shows how rationality in fact depends upon emotions. Damasio's description of the emotion's role in rationality complements the connection between the theory of empathy developed below and Arendt's enlarged mentality. The following case study will demonstrate that rationality depends upon emotions and that in order to talk about the other's narrative, we must be aware of, or at least give credence to, one's emotional state.

2.2 Elliot's Story

I begin with a summary of Antonio Damasio's case study of Elliot. Elliot was a good husband and father, who had a job with a business firm, and had a high professional and social status. However, Elliot began to experience severe headaches, and after a period of time he had a hard time concentrating. This condition worsened, and later it was discovered that the cause of Elliot's condition was a brain tumour. When the tumour was diagnosed it was the size of a small orange and was growing larger at an increasing rate.

It [the tumour] was a meningioma, so-called because it arises out of the membranes covering the brain's surface, which are called meninges. Later...Elliot's tumour had begun growing in the midline area, just above the nasal cavities, above the plane formed by the roof of the eye sockets. As the tumour grew bigger, it compressed both frontal lobes upward, from below (Damasio 35).

Elliot survived the surgery while maintaining his intelligence, memory, motor skills, and use of language; however, "in many ways Elliot was no longer Elliot" (Damasio 36). Before the surgery, Elliot was a very organized individual, but after the surgery his caregivers had to help with what would have normally been rudimentary tasks

for him. Elliot needed motivation to get started in the morning in order to be prepared to go to work. Elliot also experienced similar problems at work. His biggest struggle at work was his time management, so much so that his employers and fellow employees could not trust him with a work schedule. If Elliot were given a series of tasks to perform at the beginning of the day and then asked to change the initial schedule in order to accomplish another, Elliot would sometimes continue with the old schedule or he would sometimes start a completely unrelated task he found more interesting "...seeming losing sight of his main goal" (Damasio 36).

It was frustrating for his family and researchers because there seemed to be a separation between Elliot's thoughts and his actions. Elliot knew what he had to do but was unable to put this knowledge into action. Researchers found after the surgery that he was still intelligent; he knew what was going on in the world around him. He watched the news and remembered names, dates, faces, and so on. He discussed current political issues and understood the current economic situation of the country. Elliot also had a fully functional memory. Elliot was later administered a variety of memory tests and scored with 100 and 95 percent accuracy.

In short, perceptual ability, past memory, short-term memory, new learning, language, and the ability to do arithmetic were intact. Attention, the ability to focus on a particular mental content to the exclusion of others, was also intact; and so was working memory, which is the ability to hold information in mind over a period of many seconds and to operate on it mentally (Damasio 41).

According to Damasio, "The tragedy of this otherwise healthy and intelligent man was that he was neither stupid nor ignorant, and yet he *acted* [my italics] often as if he were" (38). Elliot's seemingly irrational actions were reflected in his decision making processes. For example, if Elliot was given the task at work to read several case studies

and then organize them, he would read and understand the significance of each case study. He also knew how to organize these files just as anyone would in this particular workplace. Elliot, however, would read one case study so carefully that he would spend an entire day doing so. He would also spend an enormous amount of time deliberating on what sorting system he would use in order to categorize these files: “Should it be by date, size of document, pertinence to the case, or another” (36)? The problem was Elliot would spend so much time on the contemplation of how to accomplish the goal he would never actually accomplish it. As Damasio states, “One might say that the particular step of the task at which Elliot balked was actually being carried out *too well*, and at the expense of the overall purpose” (36).

It was later discovered that Elliot’s defects in decision-making processes were “...accompanied by a reduction in emotional reactivity and feeling” (Damasio 51). Damasio hypothesized that the ‘cold-bloodedness’ of Elliot’s reasoning “...prevented him from assigning different values to different options, and made his decision-making landscape hopelessly flat” (51). It is here that we begin to see how rationality depends upon emotions. The outcome of this case study, and others cited by Damasio, suggests that one of the functions of the emotions is to add value to possible lines of action in order to aid in decision-making processes⁶. I now turn to the task of providing more detailed definitions of the terms ‘reason’ and ‘rationality’ in order to support my preceding claim.

2.3 Definitions

⁶ I will discuss the functions of the emotions in the section on the emotional marker hypothesis.

Following Damasio, I do not use the terms reason and rationality interchangeably because of the different connotations of the two. Damasio makes this point in the following way:

I generally use the term reason as the ability to think and make inferences in an orderly, logical manner; and rationality as the quality of thought and behaviour that comes from reasoning and decision making interchangeably since not all reasoning processes are followed by a decision (269).

This is consistent with Elliot's case because he could understand what he had to do (reason) but was unable to implement this reason in action. I use the term rationality to denote the ability to implement reason in action.

I will use the term rationality to refer to the ability to implement reason into action. Like Ronald de Sousa, I take rationality to be a category, i.e., classifying things in 'kinds'. Recall that for Aristotle, human beings are rational animals (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*). Aristotle is using this definition in a categorical sense: in order to be a human being, an animal must meet the requirements of the category 'rational'. In order to be considered 'rational' one must at least be 'minimally rational'. In order to illustrate what I mean by the category of minimal rationality, I will describe de Sousa's example of a patient, Percival's reason for walking into a lake.

Percival walks into a lake. He is crazy: in the light of his projects and his plans, his action makes no sense. But it was not somnambulism, nor was he pushed. He just wanted to walk into the lake. That's a crazy want, but in the light of just that isolated want his *action* is perfectly rational. And so, in light of some narrow context of wants, is every irrational action (160).

Although Percival's reason (in the sense of motive) for walking into the lake is 'crazy', nevertheless, Percival has met the condition of minimal rationality. Percival 'evaluated' that he wanted to walk into the lake and chose to do so. Whether he has good

or bad reasons is irrelevant for an assessment of minimal rationality. To violate the principle of minimal rationality is to eradicate choice. For example, if Percival walked into the lake due to a neurological disease or was pushed, then his action would not be minimally rational. In order to classify an action as rational, it must be at least minimally rational. For de Sousa, minimal rationality is "...a necessary condition of an intentional state or event's being describable as *categorically* rational, that under some description it can properly be said to be *evaluatively* rational" (160). Therefore, to be minimally rational, there has been a satisfaction of some condition to be recognized in the category of rationality. To return to Aristotle's example, in order to be human, a being must satisfy the condition of rationality.

Recall Elliot's example. Elliot was not rational in the sense that he could not put his abstract reasoning into action. In addition, he did not meet the condition of minimal rationality because Elliot's actions were the result of a form of brain damage. The brain damage inhibited Elliot from making a conscious decision concerning his action, i.e., he could not provide a justification for his actions.

2.4 Emotional Marker Hypothesis

What then is the function of the emotions in rationality? Is there only *one* function of the emotions? In order to explore these questions, I will present Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis. However, I will refer to this hypothesis as the 'emotional marker hypothesis' because I believe using the term 'somatic' appears to refer simply to physical processes thereby setting up a distinction between mind and body. I will discuss later in the paper (in the section on embodiment in the second chapter) why this is problematic. I

want to use the emotional marker hypothesis to further develop my argument that emotions aid in decision-making processes. Recall Elliot's dilemma of how to categorize case studies at work. He could not assign a value to a particular strategy in order to finish the job. Emotional markers primarily assign value, although they are not sufficient for decision-making processes.

... [Emotional markers] may not be sufficient for normal human decision-making since a subsequent process of reasoning and final selection will still take place in many though not all instances. [Emotional markers] probably increase the accuracy and efficiency of the decision making process. Their absence reduces them (Damasio 173).

How do these emotional markers work? Take for example a chain of actions one must perform any given morning: take a shower, eat breakfast, brush one's teeth, comb one's hair, get dressed, and pay the phone bill. These 'emotional markers' aid in the decision-making processes by adding a value to each task in order to determine what task to do first. For example, one could contemplate what to do first for infinity. You could have a shower first because you think you are dirty, but you have to pay the phone bill because it is overdue, but you are hungry and must eat breakfast, yet you have something stuck between your teeth so you must brush your teeth, and so on. Without assigning a value to these options this contemplation could deter you from accomplishing any of these tasks. Unfortunately, this was the predicament Elliot experienced with any set of tasks. 'Emotional markers' then assign values in order to "...generate positive future outcomes" (Damasio 175). For example, if it is beneficial to pay the phone bill first, then paying the phone bill will be 'marked' emotionally as the most activity. When there is an

assignment of value, one is able to choose what task to accomplish in order to have a beneficial future outcome⁷.

This paper has established that one function of the emotions is to assign value. Another function of the emotions, I will argue, is the recognition of value. Martha Nussbaum claims that emotions are a form of evaluative judgment, in that emotions are intentional; emotions are judgments about things we take to be valuable (191). For example, Nussbaum examines the statement that her mother has died and the emotion(s) that follows:

My mother has died. It strikes me, it *appears* to me, that a person of enormous value, who was central to my life, is no longer there. It feels as if a nail has entered my insides, as if life has suddenly a large rip or tear in it, a gaping hole. I see, as well, her wonderful face – both as tremendously loved and as forever lost to me. The *appearance*, in however many ways we picture it, is *propositional*: it combines the thought of importance with the thought of loss, its *content* is that this importance is lost. And it is evaluative: it does not just assert, “Betty Craven is dead.” Central to the propositional *content* is my mother’s enormous importance, both to herself as well as to me as an element in *my* life (192).

Therefore, not only is there an assignment of value, another function of the emotions is the recognition of value. It is here in the recognition of value, that one is able to distinguish one emotion from another. According to Nussbaum, “Emotions are not *about* their objects merely in the sense of being pointed at them and let go, the way an arrow is let go against its target” (188). In other words, I am not emotional towards any particular object; there is something ‘special’ I perceive in the object I am intentional toward. Nussbaum states that part of the identity of the emotions relies on the perception

⁷ For more details on the elaborate exposition of Damasio’s position please refer to *Descartes’ Error* (1994).

of the object. Therefore, what distinguishes one emotion from another is its object and the way the object is perceived. As Nussbaum says,

What distinguishes fear from hope, fear from grief, love from hate – is not so much the identity of the object, which might not change, but the way the object is perceived: in fear, as a threat, but with some chance for escape; in hope, as in some uncertainty, but with a chance for a good outcome; in grief as lost; in love as invested with a special sort of radiance (188).

To tie all of these observations and arguments back to the purpose of this paper, I draw the reader's attention to the emphasis placed by Benhabib and Young upon the importance of narrative in understanding the other's perspective. This discussion of the emotional marker hypothesis shows the weakness of their common neglect of the importance of the other's emotional state for each individual's decision making processes. In order to understand the other's narrative, one must not overlook her or his emotional incentives for her or his actions. This inevitably leads us to ask, how can we understand the other's emotional incentive? It is normally held that the ability to understand another's emotional state constitutes the common understanding of empathy. Before, however, I develop this theory of empathy, it is necessary that I describe how this formulation of empathy fits into embodiment phenomenology. As I will argue, empathy is essential to embodiment phenomenology. Therefore, I must develop what I mean by embodiment phenomenology.

2.5 A Note on Embodiment

Embodiment phenomenology refers to the variety of phenomenology propounded by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In both *The Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty says that our subjectivity must be understood as

embodied subjectivity. In so saying, Merleau-Ponty is objecting to the Husserlian notion that a transcendental subject constitutes meaning, i.e., the world is determined by a 'pure' subject.⁸ Merleau-Ponty's point is that we are not pure subjects and that we are both subject and object, and that this relationship must be seen as embodiment. The best way to illustrate this point is to look at Merleau-Ponty's example of self-touch.

If my left hand is touching my right hand, and if I should suddenly wish to apprehend my right hand the work of my left hand as it touches, this reflection of the body upon itself always miscarries the last moment: the moment I feel my left hand with my right hand, I correspondingly cease my right hand with my left hand (*Visible* 9).

In self-touch, I am both the subject and the object of this sensation of touch.

When my right hand touches my left hand my right acts as the subject and my left as the object. However, this is reflexive. My left hand also touches my right making my left hand the subject and my right hand the object. Also, as Zahavi states "...this experience is crucial to empathy...When my left hand touches my right...I am experiencing myself in a manner that anticipates both the way in which an other would experience me and the way in which I would experience an other" (157). The point is that my subjectivity, or selfhood, is embodied within my lived body where I am both subject and object to myself and I recognize that the other has the same embodied subjectivity. As Merleau-Ponty notes, "If my consciousness has a body, why should not other bodies not 'have' consciousness?" (qtd. in Mensch 43). Here Merleau-Ponty does not mean any 'body' such as rocks and houses. As Ingo Farin and James Hart note in their translation of Husserl's lectures, "In the later writings, it seems that Husserl makes a clear distinction between *Leib*, which we have usually have translated as "lived body" and *Körper*, which

⁸ According to Michael Hammond et al, "...many commentators have been sceptical about the accuracy of Merleau-Ponty's interpretations of Husserl's work, and even about the existence of the passages cited or quoted from the (then) unpublished manuscripts" (11).

we have usually have translated as “body”, “physical body” or “body-thing” (xxviii). Therefore, by the phenomenological usage of ‘lived body’ I am referring to bodies like other subjects as you and I. This is characteristic of embodiment. But, as James Mensch cautions us embodiment “...should not be thought of as inhabiting a body as if it were something placed in a box” (44).

This image of selfhood as ‘contained’ comes from a Cartesian conception of mind and body. The problems with Cartesian dualism are well known⁹. Although many contemporary commentators reject Cartesian dualism most famously Gilbert Ryle who coined the phrase “The Ghost in the Machine” to refer to Descartes’ dualism (*Concept*). Nevertheless, the language of separating mind and body as distinct entities is still commonly espoused in contemporary philosophy of mind (*Concept*).

One such example of Cartesian language in contemporary philosophy of mind is the debate on the problem of epiphenomenalism. Epiphenomenalism is the claim that consciousness does exist but that it does not do anything, or in other words, that consciousness is causally inefficacious. Epiphenomenalism, for example, endorses the Cartesian model that mind and body are separate while insisting that the physical world is causally closed, i.e., that every physical event has a physical cause. If this is the case, then if consciousness does exist, it does not cause, or do, anything. “Physical events can

⁹ I refer to this position as ‘Cartesian dualism’ rather than simply ‘dualism’ because there are other forms of dualism in the contemporary philosophy of mind, e.g., property dualism. Property dualism claims that conscious experience “involves properties of an individual that are not entailed by the physical properties of that individual, although they may depend lawfully on those properties.” (Chalmers 125) Conscious experience, therefore, is “a *feature* over and above the physical features of the world.” (Chalmers 125) Property dualism is not to be confused with Descartes’ substance dualism. A property dualist does not say that there are two separate substances in the universe; rather, a property dualist would say, “...there are properties of individuals in this world – the phenomenal properties – that are ontologically independent of physical properties.” (Chalmers 125)

have only physical explanations, and consciousness is not physical, so consciousness plays no explanatory role whatsoever” (Searle 47).

On the other hand, embodiment theorists hold that “The mind is not located in the head, but is embodied in the whole organism embedded in its environment” (Thompson “Consciousness” 3). Therefore, embodiment must not be seen as either a form of materialism or subjective idealism. For as Mensch states,

For the materialist...the subject is reduced to the world. It is grounded (explained) by its material, mathematically describable “axiomatic” processes and laws... [However] embodiment characterizes the self’s grasp of the world positions as neither a ground of nor as grounded by the world...the self is simply the “place” of presence... The world’s coming into presence both *requires and determines* this place. Thus, without the self, its environing world cannot appear...Such determination does not reduce the self’s consciousness to an illusion. Similarly, the self’s role in providing a place of presence for the world does not reduce the world to a mere content of consciousness (41).

Therefore, embodiment must be seen as a ‘middle theory’ between two extreme views: materialism and subjective idealism. The problem with these two viewpoints is that that they both pick an extreme side within the Cartesian dichotomy, i.e., materialism claims all is material, and subjective idealism claims that all is mental. Embodiment does not see mind and body as being separate, contradictory terms. This is captured by Stein, who rejects Descartes’ dualism of soul, by taking an Aristotelian position¹⁰: “Our

¹⁰ When Aristotle says that the mind (soul in Aristotle’s terminology) is the cause of the living body he is essentially saying that the mind acts as both the formal and final cause (*De Anima* II 4, 415b16). As a formal cause, the mind is the “essential whatness of a body” (*De Anima* II 1, 412b5). The formal cause, or the ‘essential whatness’, is the definition of the object (*Physics* II 3, 194b26). The raw materials have been put together, or ordered, in such a way, that we can distinguish what this thing is, or in other words, we are able to recognize its essence. Therefore, if the mind is the formal cause of the body, then it is senseless to speak of the two as being separate ontological entities. According to Aristotle, “That is why we can wholly dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one: it is as meaningless to ask whether the wax and the shape given to it by the stamp are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter (*De Anima* II 1, 412b5-6), which is one of Descartes’ arguments for dualism.

proposed division between soul and body was an artificial one, for the soul is always necessarily a soul in a body” (38).

Mensch also asserts that intersubjectivity is impossible under the Cartesian dichotomy. He states that under the Cartesian conception of the self, the self is “an objective observer” and that “Such a self never encounters another” (43). Mensch explains this observation as follows: Within a Cartesian scheme others

Appear over and against the observer, who distinguishes himself from them as a subject who, for all intents and purposes, is a disembodied self...In other words, I have to conceive him both as an object and as a nonextended conscious subject. Such a disembodied consciousness, which simply a sheer attending, has “no outside” and hence cannot be made objective (Mensch 43).

Mensch asserts that we must have a new definition of self, i.e., an embodied notion of self. In addition, as I will now develop, empathy is essential to an embodiment theory of intersubjectivity.

2.6 Definitions of Empathy

Before I go on any further, I must address a possible confusion in terminology. One of the major dangers of using the term ‘empathy’ is confusing the ordinary language usage of the term with the philosophical usage of the term (this does not mean that the philosophical usage is contrary to the ordinary usage; just that they are not identical). In this section, I will briefly examine how I will use the term ‘empathy’, and empathy’s relationship to a theory of intersubjectivity.

One major problem with the term ‘empathy’ is that there are numerous ways the term is used, even within academic fields. According to Adam Smith, there are several definitions of empathy within the field of psychology:

The term *empathy* refers to sensitivity to, and understanding of, the mental states of others. Hollin (1240) has written that “the ability to see the world, including one’s own behaviour, from another person’s point of view is to display empathy.” According to Hogan (308), empathy is “the act of constructing for oneself another person’s mental state.” Hoffman (48) has defined empathy as “an affective response more appropriate to someone else’s situation than to one’s own.” Eisenberg and Strayer (5) have regarded empathy as “an emotional response that stems from another’s emotional state or condition and that is congruent with the other’s emotional state or situation.” (3).

As we shall see, psychologists are not alone in defining the term empathy.

Philosophers also have their own definitions of empathy, which sometimes conflict with the psychological definitions. According to Evan Thompson, “Psychologists have used the term ‘empathy’ to describe at least three different processes: (1) *feeling* what another person is feeling; (2) *knowing* what another person is feeling; and (3) *responding compassionately* to another person’s distress” (“Human Experience” 264). Although, like Thompson, I am not going to argue that the psychologists’ usage of the term is correct or incorrect, for the purposes of this section I will explain empathy from a phenomenological perspective. Phenomenologists offer a detailed structural analysis of empathy and have distinguished at least four main aspects of the full performance of empathy:

1. The coupling or pairing of my living body with your living body in perception and action.
2. The imaginary movement or transposition of myself into your place.
3. The interpretation of you as an Other to me and of me as an Other to you.
4. The ethical and moral perception of you as a person (Thompson “Human Experience”: 264).

For the remainder of this section, I will address these four aspects of the full performance of empathy in turn as set out by Evan Thompson¹¹. In each section I will draw upon the work of phenomenologists including, James Mensch, Dan Zahavi, Edith Stein, Edmund Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty to support each aspect Thompson has set out.

2.7 Empathy & Coupling

The first aspect of empathy is coupling. According to Thompson, ‘coupling’ or ‘pairing’ means “...an associative bonding or linking of self and other on the basis of their bodily similarity” (“Human Experience” 264). In other words, this aspect of empathy is the recognition that the other’s body is similar to my own. This is important because this aspect is not similar to the common understanding of the term empathy discussed earlier, namely coming to know the content of another’s emotional state. According to Thompson, this aspect of empathy “...is not simply the grasping of another person’s particular experience (sadness, joy, and so on), but on a more fundamental aspect the experience of another as an embodied subject of experience like oneself” (“Consciousness” 17).

Edith Stein illustrates this point beautifully. According to Stein, when we perceive the other’s hand on the table we notice that “The hand resting on the table does not lie there like the book beside it. It ‘presses’ against the table more or less strongly; it lies

¹¹ It is important to note that I have called these four kinds of empathy as ‘aspects’ and not ‘levels’ or ‘stages’ as though I were setting up a similar system as Jean Piaget’s moral development in children where children pass through several stages during their development. To do so would violate the phenomenological nature these aspects are based on. Although it is unclear if Thompson wishes to do so because in some works (2001) he refers to these aspects as ‘levels’ but in other works (2002), he strictly uses the term ‘aspects’. I must thank my professors, William Sweet and James Bradley for this observation.

there limp or stretched; and I 'see' these sensations of pressure and tension in a con-primordial way" (54).

It is also at this point that, as Thompson says, "We find here a clear connection between phenomenology and recent cognitive neuroscience, in particular to ...mirror neuron findings" ("Consciousness" 17).

Mirror neurons are a particular class of visuomotor neurons originally discovered in a sector (area F5) of monkey's ventral premotor cortex. Their defining functional characteristics is that they become active both when the monkey makes a particular action (like grasping an object or holding it) and when it observes another individual (monkey or human) making a similar action (Rizzolatti 37).

However, this phenomenon is not present solely in monkeys but in humans as well. Rizzolatti explains that there is

...evidence on the existence of a mirror system in humans. It is important to note that when single neuron recording technique is used, information is typically obtained concerning a single brain area or center. Thus, the fact that up to now only one mirror neuron circuit has been defined in the monkey does not exclude the existence of other mirror neuron circuits. This point is important to stress because...circuits with mirror properties appear to be more widespread in humans than in monkeys (39).¹²

Thompson believes that this research has great implications for a theory of empathy. Thompson's analysis deserves to be quoted at length:

These findings are notable for several reasons. First, the neural system for recognizing the intentional meaning of the actions of another agent appears to be primarily of a practical nature, rather than inferential or judgmental, for it involves the direct pairing or matching of the bodies of self and other. There seems to be an immediate pairing between the animal's understanding of its own actions and its understanding of those of another, an understanding whose structure is not that of an initial perception of a non-interpreted bodily movement followed by a judgment that attributes meaning to the movement and thereby interprets it as an action. Rather, the movement of the other is already understood as a goal-

¹² For more details on the elaborate exposition of mirror neurons refer to Maxim Stamenov and Vittorio Gallese (2002) *Mirror Neurons and the Evolution of Brain and Language*.

directed action because of its match to a self-performed action...this kind of non-inferential bodily pairing of self and other is one of the hallmarks of the phenomenological analysis of empathy. Indeed the mirror neuron findings support Husserl's position that our empathic experience of another depends on one's 'coupling' or 'pairing' with the other, rather than some kind of affective fusion, as some of Husserl's contemporaries held ("Consciousness" 9).

This aspect of empathy does not make any claims about the content of the other's experience; rather, the claim is that the other is a being like us. Therefore, at this aspect we are not insisting on the ethical status of the other; we are simply making observations on the other's ontological status. To use phenomenological jargon, we are bracketing the ethical status of the other in order that we can return to it when we have a proper grounding for it.

2.8 Empathy and Transposition

In the second aspect of empathy, according to Thompson, we move from the recognition of the embodied other to the "content of the other's experience" ("Consciousness" 17). This aspect is very similar to the common understanding of empathy, but as we shall see, the ordinary understanding has to be fleshed out in a philosophical manner.

However, Young would object to this aspect of empathy on the grounds that no one can experience the content of another's experience. One may also argue that if we have access to the other's content, how can we sustain the distinction between self and other? Zahavi, who quotes Husserl, states that primordial experiences aid in self-identity. "Had I the same access to the consciousness of the other as I have to my own, the other would cease being an other and instead become a part of myself" (qtd. in Zahavi 154).

This is the case because anything that I have direct access to through consciousness I take as a part of myself. In Stein's terms, my access to my consciousness is a 'zero-point of orientation'. It is the zero point insofar as it is the center of experience. It is a permanent 'here' point whereas others have the experience of a 'there' point. As Waltraut Stein notes in the introduction to *On The Problem of Empathy* the zero point for Edith Stein is that which "... I relate my body [to] and everything outside of it. Whatever refers to the "I" is given as at no distance from the zero point and everything given at a distance from the zero point is also given at a distance from the "I" ... Thus the living body as a whole is at the zero point while all physical bodies are outside of it" (xv). The notion of the zero point will become very important in the later aspects of empathy and will answer some of the concerns raised by Arendt, Benhabib, and Young regarding the nature of empathy in the first chapter. I will address the above objections in the last chapter in two ways: first, by arguing that our experience of the other's content is not what Stein calls, *primordial* and second, by arguing that empathy is not an *all-or-nothing* phenomenon ("Human Experience" 265).

First, by primordial I mean the way we experience our own sensations through bodily presence. For example, if I stub my toe against the chair, the sensation of pain I will feel is *primordially* mine through bodily presence. When I say my experience of the other occurs through transposition I do not mean that I have the same *primordial* experience, but I am not saying that *all* of our experiences are *primordial* either. As Edith Stein says, "But not all experiences are *primordially* given nor *primordial* in their content. Memory, expectation, and fancy do not have their object bodily present before them" (8). For example, if I recall the pain three days after I stubbed my toe and reflect on how

much it hurt, then this memory is not primordial but yet I still know about the pain. Also, if I see you stub your toe against the chair, your pain is not primordial to me but I can relate to the pain you are feeling. I do not have the *exact* same pain that you are feeling because I can only experience my own pain primordially, but I relate to your pain non-primordially. Again, according to Stein,

This other subject is primordial although I do not experience its primordially; his joy is primordial although I do not experience it as primordial. In my non-primordial experience I feel, as it were, led by a primordial one not experienced by me but still there, manifesting itself in my non-primordial experience (11).

Saying that the grasp of the other's content is non-primordial sustains the concrete identity of self and other, which is characteristic of Benhabib's position, namely her distinction between the generalized other and the concrete other.¹³

Second, empathy must not be seen as an *all-or-nothing* phenomenon. By all-or-nothing I am referring to an objection made to a theory of empathy that states it is impossible to experience another's mental content and therefore, any theory that is based on empathy does not have a solid foundation because it is impossible to experience another's experience. It is important to note, however, that although I may not experience the other's experience *primordially*, i.e., as bodily present, this does not mean that empathy is an empty pursuit. According to Zahavi, "Our experience and understanding of others is fallible. This should not cause us to conclude that we cannot understand others and that empathy is to be distrusted" (55). To say otherwise presupposes that there is a privileged access to the inner states of the subject alone and that it is the subject alone who experiences them primordially. However, as Zahavi quotes Merleau-Ponty:

¹³ Benhabib's concept of the 'generalized other' and the 'concrete other' will be explained in detail in the last chapter.

We must reject the prejudice which makes ‘inner realities’ out of love, hate or anger, leaving them accessible to one single witness: the person who feels them. Anger, shame, hate, and love are not psychic facts hidden at the bottom of another’s consciousness: they are types of behaviour or styles of conduct which are visible from the outside. They exist *on* this face or *in* those gestures, not hidden behind them (qtd. in Zahavi 151).

Therefore, these ‘inner realities’ of anger and so on are publicly available to other subjects as recognizable bodily expressions. Zahavi also refers to empirical data that supports his claim. This is empirical research in pathology on people born with Möbius syndrome, which is a facial paralysis since birth that prevents those with the paralysis from making any facial expressions. Some researchers suggest that the reduced facial expressions resulting from this condition may lead to a reduced experience of feeling within the afflicted individual (153). Zahavi argues that the lack of feeling within oneself could be the result of two possible sources: first, this could be the result from “...a lack of internal feedback from [the] skin and muscle movements in the face that might make the emotion more clearly defined”, or it may be the result from the “...lack of feedback from others, a social feedback that can be highly significant for what we feel” (153).

Further psychological research supports Thompson’s claim that empathy is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon. Adam Smith hypothesizes in his article, “Cognitive Empathy and Emotional Empathy In Human Behaviour and Evolution” that there are seven models of the relationship between two forms of empathy, namely, what Smith calls, ‘cognitive empathy’ and ‘emotional empathy’¹⁴. Smith argues that the term empathy has been used in psychology to describe “...two related human abilities: mental perspective taking

¹⁴ For exact descriptions of Smith’s seven models of the relationship between cognitive and emotional empathy please refer to Adam Smith (2006) “Cognitive Empathy and Emotional Empathy in Human Behaviour and Evolution” *The Psychological Record* 56: 3.

(*cognitive* empathy, CE) and the vicarious sharing of an emotion (*emotional* empathy, EE) (3).

Furthermore, Smith goes on to say that one can have cognitive empathy without emotional empathy (although Smith also states there are benefits of having CE without EE and vice versa, which is consistent with the claim that empathy is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon)¹⁵, Smith does say that “True empathy arguably integrates CE [cognitive empathy] and EE [emotional empathy]” (4). Smith hypothesizes that there are several empathy disorders due to imbalances between these two, separable but complementary, forms of empathy:

- 1) Cognitive empathy deficit disorder (CEDD), consisting of low CE ability, but high EE sensitivity.
- 2) Emotional empathy deficit disorder (EEDD), consisting of low EE sensitivity but high CE ability (9).

On the basis of this distinction, Smith also predicts that two general empathy disorders exist:

- 1) General empathy deficit disorder (GEDD), consisting of low CE ability and low EE sensitivity.
- 2) General empathy surfeit disorder (GESD), consisting of high CE ability and high EE sensitivity (9).

Smith also hypothesizes that these four disorders can be associated with autism, antisocial personality behaviour, schizoid personality disorder, and Williams’s syndrome. For example, Smith hypothesizes that CEDD tends to be a part of autism, EEDD tends to be a part of antisocial personality disorder, that GEDD tends to be apart of schizoid personality disorder, and that GESD tends to be a part of Williams Syndrome (11-16). This is important to the discussion of Thompson’s view that empathy is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon because we can see through Smith’s various accounts of empathy

¹⁵ For more information of these benefits please refer to pages 5-7.

and disorders that although one may not exhibit characteristics of all of the forms of empathy, one can exhibit some variations of other forms of empathy.

It should be apparent from Smith's definition of cognitive empathy, CE, that Arendt's notion of enlarged mentality is specifically this perspective taking. However, Arendt would object to the second definition, i.e., emotional empathy. Arendt specifically denies adopting the emotional standpoint of the other for she would see this as trying 'to be' the other rather than thinking 'with' the other. Smith has acknowledged that such an objection is found in psychological positions on empathy. According to Smith,

Davis (9) has viewed CE and EE as 'two distinctly separate' *capacities* [my italics]. Strayer (1987) has rejected the view that there are two kinds of empathy and some theorists have suggested that it is helpful to distinguish between empathy and pure emotional contagion (4).¹⁶

Viewing empathy as not an all-or-nothing phenomenon might be seen as the first sign that empathy has a role in enlarged mentality.

To refer back to Zahavi, he quickly cautions us that the position he is advocating is not behaviourism because this view does not *reduce* mental states to behaviour, i.e., mental states are identical to, and nothing but, physical behaviour. This view still endorses the private feel of these emotions, but does not claim that they are completely private either. As Wittgenstein observed, "My thoughts are not hidden from [the other], but are just open to him in a different *way* than they are to me" (qtd. in Zahavi 153). This other way is non-primordially, which we have discussed earlier in the section on Edith Stein.

Since this aspect is of the transposition of one's perspective to that of the other's perspective, I suggest that a metaphor that can aid in explaining this aspect of empathy is

¹⁶ I would like to draw attention to Smith's reference to empathy as a 'capacity'. This will be important later when I describe later aspects of empathy.

the way we involve ourselves in literature. For example, the way in which we empathize with a fictional character while reading a novel. According to Mensch, when one empathizes with a fictional character one is faced with the obvious philosophical problem of how one conceives of the relation between the ‘real’ subject and the ‘fictional’ subject. As Mensch states,

If we ask where this character “is”, we cannot say that she is in the letters, words, or pages of the novel. Neither can we say, since in many cases the author is deceased, that she necessarily is in the author’s mind. Is she, then, in the mind of the reader? Not in any natural scientific sense. The character is not “in” us – i.e., in our brain – like an object in a box. Rather, she is present insofar as we are “in” her, that is, insofar as we imaginatively take up her character, let ourselves be shaped by her environment (12).

Mensch goes on to say that this imaginative transposition of position is characteristic of this aspect of empathy; it occurs with ‘imaginative’ characters as well as ‘real’ subjects. Also, according to Mensch, when we position ourselves in the other’s place, we do not *replace* her or him. Rather, we experience *with* the other. According to Stein, “To project oneself into another means to carry out his experience *with* [my italics] him as we have described it” (20). Stein further states that

...my hand is moved (not in reality but ‘as if’) to the place of the foreign one. It is moved into it and occupies its position and attitude, now feeling its sensations, though not primordially and not as being its own...the foreign hand is continually perceived as belonging to the foreign body so that the empathized sensations are continually brought into relief as foreign in contrast with our own sensations (54).

Mensch calls this experiencing with the other *doubling*.

As I imaginatively enter into the life of the character in the novel, my own subjectivity undergoes a doubling. In this, the novel represents the subject to itself as another by providing him with an alternate environment. In other words, the subject’s transparency is such *that it can undergo a double shaping*...The same thing can happen when another person is actually present. Genuine empathy, in taking up the other’s standpoint,

enters into the other's environment. As such, it disrupts self-presence. It makes it dual by including the other (43).

Therefore, we see my transposition into the position of the other as a doubling of myself with the other. It is here that Mensch stresses the connection between embodiment and empathy in terms of selfhood.

Selfhood...is the function of the embodiment I imaginatively share in taking up the other's standpoint. The sense a "self" has here can be expressed by answering the question: Where is Shingo [the fictional character]? ...Shingo...is where I am as I read the novel. Reading it, I take up his character, imaginatively becoming it. Shingo is in the selfhood I assume in placing myself in his environment. My selfhood does...undergo a certain doubling....This doubling of selfhood is implicit in all empathy, in all humanistic understanding. Ontologically, it follows from the notion that being is where it is at work as living flesh. My body is both my first situating environment and that through which my surrounding world works on me (44).

To say that we experience 'with' the other seems to be similar to Benhabib's and Arendt's claim that their symmetrical reciprocity is not empathy; however, as I will demonstrate this experience 'with' the other precisely implies empathy.

My account of transposition differs from Benhabib's symmetrical reciprocity when I diverge from Thompson's account of transposition. Thompson's account of transposition, as well as Benhabib's symmetrical reciprocity, could imply that in the aspect of transposition there is a necessary reversal of empathy. According to Thompson,

Described phenomenologically: I am here and I imagine going there and being at the place where you are right now. Conversely, you are here (the *there* where I imagine being) and you imagine you are going there, to the place where I am (my *here*). Through this imagined movement and spatial transposition, we are able to exchange our mental perspectives, our thoughts and feelings" ("Human Experience" 266).

The problem I am pointing to is the 'exchange' of positions. Of course, reversal is possible, and as I will argue, perhaps necessary for a full account of empathy; however, if

one adheres to the idea that empathy is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon, then we have to allow for the fact that one party may position himself in the perspective of the other without the other positioning herself in his perspective. For example, if I empathize with a fictional character, the fictional character does not empathize with me precisely because the character is fictional; therefore, there is no reversal of perspectives in this situation. To insist that every instance of empathy requires a reversal of positions would, in my opinion, violate the not all-or-nothing requirement. Rather, in order to make sense of how we should conceptualize the transposition of perspectives I suggest we adopt Judy Miles' interpretation of Stein's notion of empathy as that of 'projection'.

In one of her positive arguments for interpreting empathy as projection, Miles states (consistently with Mensch's description of empathizing with a fictional character),

I take the kind of 'projecting' which empathy involves to be very much like the experience an actress has when "putting herself in character." She contemplates the character she is about to portray and imagines what it would be like to be that person. She imagines herself in the other's place. This is necessary to being able to portray a role convincingly and one's skill at doing this is what distinguishes good acting from bad (122).

If we take this aspect of empathy as 'projection', then we avoid the problem of assuming that in every instance of empathy there is an automatic reversibility of positions. Although my position may resemble Young's objection that reversibility is impossible, unlike Young I do not insist that reversibility is impossible. In the last chapter of this thesis I will address how my position is similar to Young's position but that it does not imply her asymmetrical reciprocity.

2.9 Reiterated Empathy

The next aspect of empathy is not only the recognition that you are an other for me, but also the understanding that I am an other for you. According to Thompson,

In other words, the imaginary transposition in this kind of empathy involves the possibility of seeing myself from your perspective, that is, as you empathetically experience me... The upshot is that each of us participates in an intersubjective viewpoint that transcends our own first-person singular perspectives (“Human Experience” 266-7).

This aspect of empathy transcends our first-person perspective by seeing myself from your perspective. Through this aspect we essentially have a plurality of perspectives: our first-person perspective, and the representations of other’s perspectives. Thompson refers to this aspect of empathy as ‘reiterated empathy’ and further states that

In reiterated empathy, I see myself from your perspective. Stated more precisely, I empathetically grasp your empathetic experience of me. As a result, I acquire a view of myself not simply as a physical thing, but as a physical-thing-empathetically-grasped-by-you-as-a-living-being. In other words, I do not merely experience myself as a sentient being ‘from within’, nor grasp myself as also a physical thing in the world; I experience myself as recognizably sentient ‘from without’, that is, from your perspective, the perspective of another. In this way, one’s sense of self-identity, even at the most fundamental levels of embodied agency, is inseparable from recognition by another, and from the ability to grasp that recognition empathetically (“Consciousness” 19-20).

Reiterated empathy, then, is very similar to Merleau-Ponty’s description of self touch. In self touch, I am both the object and subject of this sensation and in reiterated empathy, not only am I aware that you are an other for me, but that I recognize that I am an other for you.

Thompson is borrowing the term ‘reiterated empathy’ from Edith Stein. According to Stein,

In “reiterated empathy” I again interpret this physical body as a living body, and so it is that I first am given to myself as a psycho-physical individual in the full sense... But I cannot look at myself freely as at another physical body. If in a childhood memory or fancy I see myself in

the branch of a tree or on the shore of the Bosphorus, I see myself as another or as another sees me. This makes empathy possible for me (58-59).

Also, in this third aspect of empathy, not only do I transpose myself into the place of the other and experience her content, but I become aware of a specific content, namely, her perception of me. To tie this back to Merleau-Ponty's rejection of an interpretation of Husserl, I am not a pure transcendental Ego that constitutes meaning and consequently the world; rather, I am an embodied subject who is a subject as well as an object *of* the world that is among other subjects in the same situation.

Next, I will describe the last aspect of empathy, namely, empathy's relation to ethics.

2.10 Empathy & Ethics

There must be an emotional concern for the other if we are to have an ethical theory¹⁷. However, Thompson cautions us that this aspect of empathy is not to be *identified* as the feeling concern for the other, such as sympathy, love, or compassion, but "...instead as the underlying *capacity* [my italics] to have such other-directed and other-regarding feelings of concern" ("Human Experience" 268). This aspect of empathy must be understood as the ability or the capability of having these feelings of concern for the other because the levels we have discussed throughout this paper are understood as capacities or capabilities for performing their respective actions empathetically. To 'identify' empathy at this aspect with the feeling seems to confuse the potentiality for the act with the act.

¹⁷ This is consistent and almost necessary given the discussion of Damasio's neuropsychological discovery of the emotion's role in rationality.

This aspect is important to an ethical theory because it puts emphasis on the concern and respect for the other. Since the emphasis is on the genuine concern and respect for the other, Thompson then questions moral theories that privilege reason over feeling¹⁸ (“Human Experience” 269). For example, Kant’s Categorical Imperative is supposed to be seen as purely rational. We are to use the Categorical Imperative, which states that we are to act only in accord with policies, or maxims, which can be applied universally among all subjects, to discover what is morally permissible and our ‘duty’. Therefore, for Kant, “Duty is the necessity of an action done out of respect for the law” (*Morals* 13). The sentiment of acting out of duty and not in accordance with feeling is expressed best by Kant’s example of someone who is distressed but must help his friend:

Suppose then the mind of this friend of mankind to be clouded over with his own sorrow so that all sympathy with the lot of others is extinguished, and suppose him still to have the power to benefit others in distress, even though he is not touched by their trouble because he is sufficiently absorbed with his own; and now suppose that, even though no inclination moves him any longer, he nevertheless tears himself from his deadly insensibility and performs the action without any inclination at all, but solely from duty – then for the first time his action has genuine moral worth” (*Morals* 11).

For Kant, the subject’s ‘feelings’ do not aid him in his decision to act morally; rather, for Kant, these ‘feelings’ (as he sees them) may impede this person to act morally by tempting the subject to act selfishly. To act selfishly violates the Categorical Imperative for it wills something that is not to be universalized. Therefore, for Kant, these feelings should not play a role in moral action.

However, Thompson questions ethical theories such as Kant’s that prioritize rationality over moral feelings. In fact, Thompson goes on to say that emotions, which

¹⁸ Again, this is further supported by the research of Antonio Damasio that was discussed at the beginning of this chapter who argues that our rationality depends upon emotions, which is characteristic of the emotional marker hypothesis.

Kant says may impede moral action, are in fact necessary for moral action. As Frans de Waal observes, “Aid to others in need would never be internalized as a duty without the fellow-feeling that drives people to take an interest in one another. Moral sentiments came first; moral principles second” (qtd. in Thompson “Human Experience” 269). In other words, the incentive for moral principles must be grounded in moral feelings because even in Kant’s theory we need to have an emotional tie to the Categorical Imperative for us to abide by it throughout our lives. Again, to quote Thompson,

Empathy is the basic cognitive and emotional capacity underlying all the moral sentiments and emotions we can have for another. The point here is not that empathy exhausts the domain for moral and ethical experience, for clearly it does not. The point is that empathy provides the source of that domain and the entry point into it, because empathy is what enables us to develop concern and respect for others as persons (“Human Experience” 269).

This observation is supported by the section on emotions described earlier. Recall, that there are at least two functions of the emotions; to assign and to recognize value which in turn leads to moral sentiments. Therefore, moral sentiments have to be in place first otherwise we would find ourselves in the same ‘cold-bloodedness’ of Elliot’s situation. Kant may object by saying that emotions may impede the fulfillment our duty, we nevertheless must assign a moral sentiment on duty in order to abide by said duty.

2.11 Chapter Summary

In this section of the thesis, I have tried to emphasize how our subjectivity is understood, namely, through embodiment, and how others are also embodied in a physical and social environment. The remainder of this section elucidated the way in which we as embodied subjects, understand the other, i.e., through empathy. Empathy, as

conceived of in this paper, is not to be seen as an all-or-nothing phenomenon; it is the understanding of the other's experiential content with the other. Therefore, the self and the other double our selfhood. Here our very selfhood is a constitution of self and other, which amplifies the impact others have on our own consciousness.

In the last section of this thesis, I wish to return to the claims made by Arendt, Benhabib and Young regarding enlarged mentality and empathy. My objective is to demonstrate how their concepts rely upon a notion of embodiment and to demonstrate through transposition that these concepts rely upon the notion of empathy.

Chapter Three

3.1 Objective

In this chapter, I demonstrate that Arendtian concepts-- ‘going visiting’, *sensus communis*, impartiality, enlarged mentality, and the actor/spectator -- rely upon embodiment phenomenology and thus, upon the form of empathy described in the previous chapter. In order to make this argument I will examine not only Arendt’s claims, but also those of Arendtian philosophers such as Seyla Benhabib and Lisa Disch.

I will begin by examining Benhabib’s potential response to Young’s objections to symmetrical reciprocity (the theory that claims that the positions of others are reversible). I believe that Benhabib would respond by attacking Young’s conception of the self and from here, I will argue that Benhabib’s positive account of self relies upon embodiment phenomenology. In this section, I will present Benhabib’s view of the ‘generalized’ and the ‘concrete’ other in order to clarify a possible misinterpretation on Young’s behalf. I will also examine how Lisa Disch’s concept of situated impartiality, which she derives from Arendt’s work on Archimedean impartiality, specifically implies embodied phenomenology.

3.2 Generalized & Concrete Other

According to Benhabib, there are two important conceptions of self/other relationships within moral philosophy¹⁹. Benhabib names the first conception the ‘generalized’ and the second the ‘concrete’ other. Benhabib also informs us that “In

¹⁹ In her book, *Situating the Self*, Benhabib describes “...two conceptions of self-other relations that delineate both moral perspectives and interactional structures. I shall name the first the standpoint of the ‘generalized’ and the second that of the ‘concrete’ other” (158).

contemporary moral theory these two conceptions are viewed as incompatible, even antagonistic” (158). She goes on further to say that

These two perspectives reflect the dichotomies and splits of early modern moral and political theory between autonomy and nurturance, independence and bonding, the public and the domestic, and more broadly, between justice and the good life. The content of the generalized as well as the concrete other is shaped by this dichotomous characterization, which we have inherited from the modern tradition (158).

Benhabib characterizes the generalized other as follows:

The standpoint of the generalized other requires us to view each and every individual as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties we would want to ascribe to ourselves. In assuming the standpoint, we abstract from the individuality and concrete identity of the other. We assume that the other, like ourselves, is a being who has concrete needs, desires, and affects, but that what constitutes his or her moral dignity is not what differentiates us from each other, but rather what we, as speaking and acting rational agents, have in common (159)²⁰.

On the other hand, the concrete other is characterized as follows:

The standpoint of the concrete other... requires us to view each and every rational being as an individual with a concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution. In assuming this standpoint, we abstract from what constitutes our commonality, and focus on individuality. We seek to comprehend the needs of the other, his or her motivations, what s/he searches for, and what s/he desires... Our differences in this case complement rather than exclude one another (Benhabib 159).

Nevertheless, one may ask, how is Benhabib’s notion of the concrete other an answer to Young’s objections to symmetrical reciprocity? I will take this concept of the concrete other and answer each objection in turn in such a way as I believe Benhabib would answer these objections herself.

²⁰ Benhabib also points out that she has borrowed the term ‘generalized’ other from George Herbert Mead but that her definition is different than his. For Mead characterizes the generalized other as “The organized community or social group which gives the individual his unity of self may be called the ‘generalized other’. The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community” (qtd. in Benhabib 174n22).

Recall that Young has three major objections to Benhabib's notion of symmetrical reciprocity. Briefly stated, Young's first objection is that this idea of symmetry obscures the difference and particularity of the other's position. Symmetry suggests that people are able to understand one another's perspectives because we are all similar; we are able to see ourselves "reflected in the other people and find that they see themselves reflected in us" (Young 44). In fact, Young argues we each have our different life-stories, or narratives, emotional habits, and so on, that make our positions irreversible (45).

Young's first objection resembles Thomas Nagel's position in his famous article "What is it Like to Be a Bat?" Nagel argues against the materialist position that holds that once we have comprehensive scientific knowledge about our physical processes, we will know all there is to know about our mental states. As the title of Nagel's paper suggests, we can know everything about a bat's physiology but we can never know what it is like to be a bat. It is this conscious experience of what it is like to be something that is the *hard problem of consciousness*.²¹ This qualitative 'feel' can never be captured from a third-person perspective but can only be known through a first-person perspective. Nagel thus argues for the first person perspective. Materialists try to reduce the hard problem to a material process in order to eliminate the problem finally. However, Nagel objects to this position and points out that all of the scientific knowledge of neuroscience cannot explain the felt experience of the subject whose experiences it is.

I believe Benhabib would respond to Young by saying that the concept of the other that Young is employing is precisely that of the 'generalized' other; not the concrete other. Recall Benhabib's objection to the generalized other and her insistence

²¹ The 'hard problem of consciousness' has been the center of debate in the philosophy of mind in the past decade. For more information on the 'hard problem of consciousness' see David Chalmers *The Conscious Mind*.

that the concrete other should be our model of the other. Young's first objection is dissolved. Young focuses solely on the generalized other rather than looking at Benhabib's elaborate definition of the concrete other. Once we note that the concrete other is the centre of Benhabib's notion of symmetrical reciprocity, Young's objection is dissolved because Young is objecting to a notion of the generalized other, not the concrete other.

In addition, Young seems to imply that the self and the other are two distinct and different entities; however, Arendt would object to this claim for she says that there is a difference between 'otherness' and 'distinctness'.

Human distinctness is not the same as otherness...Otherness, it is true, is an important aspect of plurality, the reason why all our definitions and distinctions, why we are unable to say what anything is without distinguishing it from something else. Otherness in its most abstract form is found only in the sheer multiplication of inorganic objects, whereas all organic life already shows variations and distinctions, even between specimens of the same species. But only man can express this distinction and distinguish himself, and only he can communicate himself and not merely something – thirst or hunger, affection or hostility or fear. In man, otherness, which he shares with everything that is, and distinctness, which he shares with everything else alive, becomes uniqueness, and human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings. Speech and action reveal this unique distinctness. Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but *qua* men (*Human Condition* 176).

Disch also notes this difference in Arendt. I believe Disch would agree with Nagel's insistence upon the irreducibility of conscious experience, but she also argues that "Arendt defends the possibility of visiting on the premise that human differences are *irreducible* to one another but are not *incommensurable*" (Disch 164). Where Young insists that each individual is different, she seems to advocate that the differences are *incommensurable*. Although, Young does say that the way we come to understand

“across difference” is by ‘listening’ to the other. However, this is more complicated than Young anticipates. There is a problem with Young’s notion of intersubjectivity, which resembles the objection raised against Cartesian dualism: how is it possible that two radically different and distinct individuals come to understand one another by ‘listening’ to one another? Instead, communicability must be understood through enlarged mentality. As Arendt says, “Communicability obviously depends upon the enlarged mentality; one can communicate only if one is able to think from the other person’s standpoint; otherwise one will never meet him, never speak in such a way that he understands” (*Lectures* 74).

Young’s second objection is that it is ontologically impossible for people in one social position to adopt the perspective of those in another social position. To recognize the other as other and self as self means: “...she is an ‘I’ to herself as I am an ‘I’ to myself and that I am an ‘other’ to her just as she is an ‘other’ to me (Young 46). However, according to Young, this is not a symmetrical relationship (which is Benhabib’s position) rather, “This relation of self and other is asymmetrical and irreversible, even though it is reciprocal. The reciprocal recognition...cannot entail a reversibility of perspectives” (Young 46-47). Here Young is reiterating the Levinasian concern of collapsing the self and other (Levinas *Ethics* and *Totality*).

Young’s second objection resembles Disch’s objection against a theory of empathy because, according to Disch, empathy is a form of assimilation. Again for Disch, one of the essential elements in Arendt’s philosophy is ‘going visiting’, but, ‘going visiting’ is not empathy. As Disch describes,

Visiting is contrary to parochialism, which means simply to stay at home, contrary to ‘accidental’ tourism, which means to ensure that you will have

all the comforts of home even as you travel, and contrary to assimilationism, which means forcibly to make yourself at home in a place that is not your home by appropriating its customs. To visit, in other words, you must travel to a new location, leave behind what is familiar, and resist the temptation to make yourself at home where you are not. Both the tourist and the assimilationist erase plurality (159).

However, if we return to Benhabib's concept of the concrete other, the otherness of the other is constantly sustained; the concrete other never collapses into the self, as Benhabib says is characteristic of the generalized other. For according to Benhabib, under the generalized other, "...the *other as different from the self* disappears" (161). Rod Michalko's discussion of George Herbert Mead echoes this point:

...the 'I' is not destroyed through the formation of a 'we'. Instead, the two co-exist in the social world expressed in the interminable dialectic of estrangement and familiarity. We become 'reconciled' to the world, but we will always be to some degree estranged from it as well, "to the extent of [our] distinct uniqueness" (106).

This sentiment is perfectly consistent with Benhabib's notion of the concrete other, for it sustains the self/other distinction through particularity and individuality without collapsing the self and other. Further, recall Stein's and Mensch's insistence that in empathy, we do not experience *as* the other; rather, we experience *with* the other.

Finally, taking the perspective of the other, for Young, can have "politically undesirable consequences" (Young 44). Young points out that when people try to put themselves in the position of others, "they often put *themselves*, with their own particular experiences and privileges," in the positions of the person in which they are trying to represent in this enlarged mentality (48). It is here I believe that Benhabib would object to Young's interpretation of Arendt's concept of 'enlarged mentality' and say that Young's interpretation seems to imply what Arendt, and Benhabib, characterize as empathy. According to Benhabib,

...Arendt also noted the capacity for exercising an 'enlarged mentality', the ability to take the standpoint of the other into account is not empathy although it is related to it. Empathy means the capacity to "feel with, to feel together." Yet precisely very empathetic individuals may also be the ones lacking an 'enlarged mentality', for their empathetic nature may make it difficult for them to draw the boundaries between self and other such that the standpoint of the 'concrete other' can emerge (168).

It is also at this point where I depart from Benhabib. I will argue now that it is precisely through embodiment phenomenology that the 'concrete other' can emerge.

3.3 Benhabib & Embodiment

Benhabib warns us that her arguments for the distinction, and the preference of, the concrete other over the generalized other is not prescriptive:

This distinction between the 'generalized' and the 'concrete' other...is not a *prescriptive* but a *critical* one. My goal is not to prescribe a moral or political theory consonant with the standpoint of the concrete other...my purpose is to develop a universalistic moral theory that defines the 'moral point of view' in light of the reversibility of perspectives and an 'enlarged mentality'. Such a moral theory allows us to recognize the dignity of the generalized other through an acknowledgement of the moral identity of the concrete other (164).

However, if we examine the language of Benhabib's argument we discover that her argument for the concrete other is a negative one. Benhabib arrives at the concrete other through arguments against the generalized other.

I conclude that a definition of the self that is restricted to the standpoint of the generalized other becomes incoherent and cannot individuate among selves. Without assuming the standpoint of the concrete other, no coherent universalizability test can be carried out, for we lack the necessary epistemic information to judge my moral situation to be 'like' or 'unlike' yours (163-164).

Although Benhabib's negative argument is valid, it is not as strong as a positive argument. I am not arguing against Benhabib's notion of the concrete other; rather I

believe the foundation she looks for is found in the previous chapter of this thesis. The notion of selfhood that Benhabib employs resembles the notion of selfhood I have described at length in the second chapter, namely, selfhood as embodiment. Below Benhabib is describing her account of human identity, but if we examine what follows, we shall see that her account of identity resembles a theory of embodiment.

Identity does not refer to my potential for choice alone, but to the actuality of my choices, namely to how I, as a finite, concrete, *embodied* [my italics] individual, shape and fashion the circumstances of my birth and family, linguistic, cultural, and gender identity into a coherent narrative that stands as my life's story (161-162).

In addition, if we compare Benhabib's concept of the concrete other to Stein's description of the zero point of orientation, we can conclude that they are completely compatible with one another. Recall the discussion of the zero point of orientation: "... I relate my body and everything outside of it. Whatever refers to the "I" is given as at no distance from the zero point is also given at a distance from the "I" ... Thus the living body as a whole is at the zero point while all physical bodies are outside of it" (Stein XV).

The zero point of orientation resembles Benhabib's notion of the concrete other insofar as the zero point of orientation must be seen as a foundation or basis for the notion of the concrete other. Benhabib's characterization of the concrete other is that of a subject who has a concrete history, narrative, and so on. This is demonstrated in the discussion of the zero point of orientation. The basis of each individual concrete other can be seen as each individual having his or her own respective center for primordial experience. If we posit the other's concrete primordial experience, then this notion has a theory of embodiment at its foundation.

It is central to note the importance of embodiment to a theory of the concrete other. As I will argue, the concrete other is grounded by embodiment phenomenology. Also, as demonstrated in the second chapter, one key factor in an embodiment theory of intersubjectivity is empathy²².

I will now turn to the next concept, and perhaps the most important concept in Arendt's philosophy, impartiality, and argue that it depends upon an embodied phenomenology.

First, recall how important impartiality is for Arendt. In a political context, it is essential to have impartiality, especially within a multicultural context. The way in which Arendt wants to achieve impartiality is to take the standpoint of the spectator and not the actor. Again, recall that Arendt describes the spectator as:

...the spectator occupies a position that enables him to see the whole; the actor, because he is part of the play, must enact his part – he is partial by definition. The spectator is impartial by definition – no part is assigned to him. Hence, withdrawal from direct involvement to a standpoint outside the game is a condition *sine qua non* of all judgment (*Lectures 55*).

It is also important to note that Arendt is not talking about a *disembodied* spectator, which Lisa Disch refers to as possessing Archimedean impartiality.²³ Instead, Disch argues that Arendt's spectator does not search for Archimedean impartiality, but rather, a situated impartiality.

3.4 Lisa Disch, Situated Impartiality & Embodiment

²² Benhabib, however, may object to this assertion because I am not using the term 'empathy' in the same manner as she uses the term. This should not, however, be seen as an objection; rather, it should be seen as approval of the thesis project as a whole. I am trying to provide Arendt, Benhabib, Young, and other political philosophers, a different definition of empathy that could be useful especially if one wants to use Arendt's theory of enlarged mentality and Benhabib's concrete other.

Disch characterizes Arendt's work as a contrast to Archimedean impartiality.

According to Disch,

Arendt's attack on Archimedean thinking differs from that of post-structuralist and feminist critical theorists in an important way. She argues that the problem with the Archimedean model is not its claim that critique should be impartial but its assumption that impartiality entails an absolute withdrawal from worldly interest (12).

In other words, the Archimedean model that Disch says Arendt is arguing against is one that *completely* removes oneself from the situation as though it were removed from all bias. In short, Disch describes the Archimedean model as a model that "...consists in conceiving of power as leverage and assuming that abstract impartiality is requisite to knowledge" (22). Disch wants to distance herself from any model that wants to adopt a purely objectivist, or disembodied perspective that insists on having a purely objective position in order to make judgments. The model that Disch says is present in Arendt's philosophy is what Disch has named 'situated impartiality'.

I suggest the paradox 'situated impartiality' to name the elusive critical position that is achieved by visiting. Arendt herself does not use the term. Rather, I discern it from the various places where she describes the enlarged mentality as 'being and thinking' as yourself from a position in which you are not at home. Where Arendt presents the visiting metaphor as an insight that she learned from Kant, 'situated impartiality' presents it as a conceptual innovation and a departure from his text. It should be clear...that this is not a term I am forcing onto Arendt but one that emerged out of my close reading of her work (161-162).

Disch goes on further to describe situated impartiality as:

...a critical decision that is not justified with reference to an abstract standard of right by visiting a plurality of diverging public standpoints. Though arriving at a situated impartial judgment is a public and collective process, it does not involve the absolute or definitive resolution of conflict either by transcending it or by subsuming it within an all-encompassing solution (162).

Disch describes Arendt's objection to an Archimedean model by arguing that the Archimedean position is consistent with a model that can 'jump outside of time', which undermines Arendt's conception of storytelling and enlarged mentality as a whole.

But, consistent with her critique of Archimedean thinking, she rejects the fantasy of jumping outside of time. Arendt observes that there would be no history to think about if man jumped outside of time, because without the insertion into time of beings whose life spans are limited and nonrenewable, "there would be no difference between past and future, but only everlasting change." Just as there can be no space without human plurality, there can be no time without human natality (166).

This is also similar to Merleau-Ponty's objection to empiricism, which according to Merleau-Ponty tries to examine consciousness in terms of objective language. This is why Merleau-Ponty holds that philosophy is not a science.

Philosophy is not a science, because science believes it can soar over its object and hold the correlation of knowledge with being as established, whereas philosophy is the set of questions wherein he who questions is himself implicated by the question (*Visible* 27).

For Merleau-Ponty, if we are able to 'soar over' our object of study, e.g., our body, then there could be no self-reference because we would be detached from our body.²⁴ To refer to the self, means to refer to our body. This is consistent with the claims of establishing the zero point of orientation as we have seen in Stein, and the concrete other as we have seen in Benhabib. For Merleau-Ponty, the only way we are able to have self-reference is if we are embodied subjects. In addition, we, as human beings, are both subject and object. If we were just pure objects, as is the position of empiricism according to Merleau-Ponty, then it would be not possible for either the left or the right hand to sense each other at all. To experience sensation requires a subject; a pure object

²⁴ Recall my exposition of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of self-touch in the second chapter: for Merleau-Ponty, self-touch is the essential in understanding our subjectivity because self-touch is characteristic of our embodied nature.

entails no subject at all. If the body is a pure object, then there would be no perceiver. In language suitable to Merleau-Ponty, the scientist has an explanation for everything except for the scientist him or herself.²⁵

3.5 Enlarged Mentality and Empathy

The last Arendtian concept I will discuss is the conception of enlarged mentality itself. I will demonstrate how enlarged mentality resembles the theory of empathy I have argued for throughout this thesis. First, there is a remarkable similarity between Arendt's description of enlarged mentality (and of the method she prescribes to gain such an enlarged mentality) and the elaborate definition of empathy. Arendt says that enlarged mentality is accomplished by "...comparing our judgment with the possible rather than the actual judgments of others, and by putting ourselves in the place of any other man." The faculty that makes this possible is called imagination" (*Lectures* 43). Therefore, enlarged mentality is the collection of standpoints we *imaginatively represent* to ourselves whenever we make a judgment in order to escape the prejudices of the actor in order to reach the perspective or, using Arendt's language, the standpoint of the spectator. However, if we recall Stein's position on empathy, we notice that she too uses the same language, arguing that empathy is made possible by imaginatively representing the viewpoint of the other to oneself.

Also, stating one can find similarities of the theory of empathy I have proposed and enlarged mentality is consistent with James Mensch's elaboration of the experience of empathy and transposition. Mensch would argue against Disch's insistence that empathy is an assimilationist theory because according to Mensch, when we position

²⁵ I must thank my professor, James Mensch, for this observation.

ourselves in the other's place, we do not *replace* them; rather, we experience *with* the other. This is consistent with both Stein who says, "To project oneself into another means to carry out his experience *with* [my italics] him as we have described it" (20), and Disch's description of 'going visiting'.

Again, another of Arendt's concepts implies a theory of embodied subjectivity, and as we have established in the second chapter, empathy is crucial in a theory of embodiment. Therefore, given the more elaborate definition of empathy I have described, I believe that Arendt would subscribe to this theory of empathy. The definition of empathy I have described acts as a grounding for her theory of enlarged mentality because the majority of her concepts are based upon a theory of embodiment.

3.6 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter has been to demonstrate how Arendtian concepts rely upon embodiment phenomenology. Through the careful exposition of Benhabib's concept of the generalized other and the concrete other, I have addressed Young's three objections, while demonstrating that the 'concrete' other is established through Stein's notion of the zero point of orientation. In addition, I have also demonstrated that Arendt's notion of impartiality relies upon an embodied subject that is described by Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible*. In the second chapter it was further shown that empathy is quintessential to an embodied theory of intersubjectivity.

In conclusion, through a careful examination of the foundations of Arendt's key concepts of her theory of enlarged mentality -- 'going visiting', *sensus communis*, impartiality, enlarged mentality, and the actor/spectator -- I have demonstrated that

enlarged mentality is best understood as reliant upon the type of empathy described in the second chapter. What has been shown is not that Arendt is incorrect in insisting that enlarged mentality is not a form of empathy. Rather, I have argued that Arendt's theory of enlarged mentality necessarily entails the variant of empathy based on embodiment phenomenology outlined above.

I believe that this project will have far reaching implications. First, and foremost, it opens up the possibility for new research in interpreting and utilizing Arendt's texts as it applies to contemporary social and political philosophy. Second, the findings of this project can influence other ethical theories to examine the phenomenological underpinnings of their respective theories. This will in turn lead to the third implication of this paper, namely it aids in relating research in the philosophy of mind and ethics in order to provide a more comprehensive theory of human nature.

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