

## THE IM/POSSIBILITY OF EMPATHY

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*The capacity to share and understand another's state of mind or the ability to put oneself into another's shoes or, in some way, experience the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself has been referred to as empathy. It is a presumed ability to burrow into another person's structures of consciousness and experience oneself as another. Hence it involves the capacity of one to understand or feel what another is experiencing from within their frame of reference. This paper investigates the im/possibility of empathy. The question of the im/possibility of empathy finds expression in the question of the possibility of a subject's access into the subjective conscious experiences of another. The paper appraises various positions accruing from the basic Husserlian/Steinian views. It also highlights the optimists' belief that empathy puts us in touch with others in a way that generates a compassionate concern that forms the foundation of morality and the pessimists' view that empathy merely blurs the distinction between oneself and others, yielding self-interested motivation or at least precluding genuine altruism. This paper suggests that the problem of the im/possibility of empathy would persist in so far as the definition of empathy involves 'feeling with' rather than 'feeling for.' As Diana Meyers puts it, "the metaphor of putting oneself in the other's shoes is misleading, for it is a mistake to assume that the other feels the same way as one would oneself feel in the same circumstances." Thus, it is either that empathy is unreal or what is considered as empathy requires a redefinition.*

### INTRODUCTION

Man may be described as a communal individual. He is an individual, distinct, particular and gifted with the ability to make free choices, yet he is condemned to communion. Understandably too, he is a product of a relationship- his being a consequence of the communion between a male and a female. He is cultivated and forged within a web of relationships, hence the description 'social being' that has long been used to describe man in society. The existentialists reechoed the same sentiment when they describe man as a being-with, a being-in-the-world. No man is an Island. Aristotle was even bold enough to assert that all men pursue companionship, and anyone who thinks he has no need for a friend is either a beast or a god.

Given the age-long universal acceptance of the social nature of man, it is definite that man must have been ontologically positioned or structured in such a manner that forces him to seek friendship in the ‘other.’ There must certainly be some structures in man that seamlessly draws him to others. These structures are basic existential instincts wired through the nature of men. These structures are also responsible for the rise of the commonwealth, which eventually led to state formations.

What are these relational structures? What are those factors common to all men that naturally drive them to engage in a purposive relationship of mutual beneficence with one another? First and foremost, man is an emotional being, emotional, yet rational and conscious. This means that his emotions are always in check by the conscious application of his ability to make rational choices. Man is also endowed with the twin emotional structures of sympathy and empathy. These two structures help to direct human emotions and intentions toward the ‘other.’ Both are similar but surely perform different functions with regard to how man relates with the ‘other.’ How is empathy different from sympathy?

Empathy is founded on the belief that human persons have the capacity to participate in the feelings of one another even before such feelings are exposed via mutual conversation. Is this possible? Since every human person is unique, from whence came the idea of empathy? Does not uniqueness also suggest that all persons have thoughts and thinking processes particular and peculiar to them as individual persons? Is it possible for individuals to be both unique essentially and yet be able to participate in the feelings of each other? The idea of empathy is therefore problematic in philosophy. This paper is an attempt to capture the arguments on the possibility or not of empathy. The paper concludes that despite the logical and pragmatic difficulties associated with yielding to the possibility of empathy, it is paradoxical to put forward whatever arguments for the impossibility of empathy.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS: EMPATHY AND SYMPATHY DISTINGUISHED**

The concept ‘empathy’ is conventionally used to point to a broad range of mental capacities that are said to be central to the nature of man as a social being. These mental capacities or dispositions, according to Karstein (2019) described as ‘empathy,’ allows man to know and understand what other people are thinking and feeling, to emotionally engage with them, to share their thoughts and feelings, and to care for their well-being. For Lewis (2019), empathy can therefore be defined as the ability to identify with another person. He further holds that it involves an intrinsic ability to have a good sense of what the other person is feeling, not merely with an air of scientific detachment, but knowing in the sense of sharing. The im/possibility of empathy is a philosophical dilemma that this paper hopes to address.

The terms ‘empathy’ and ‘sympathy’ are closely related both in meaning and usage. This is unsurprising, especially when we consider the etymology of the terms. The two terms share a common Greek origin and developed from the word ‘*pathos*.’ The Greek word *pathos* means to suffer, undergo, or be at the effect of. Lou Agosta (1984, 43-61) saw that efforts have been made to distinguish the terms in various ways,

although a good number of those differentiations are controversial, and work is needed to make them more precise and authoritative. He (1984, 43-61) makes a critical attempt to differentiate the two. He notes that sympathy is usually employed to refer to a person's response to the negative effects (suffering) of another person, leading to pro-social (helping) behavior towards the other. In contrast, empathy generally includes a response to positive effects as well as negative ones without, however, necessarily requiring doing anything about it. That is, no pro-social (helping) behavior may be required in the case of empathy. Sympathy for him (1984, 43-61) is thus understood to include agreement or approbation, whereas empathy is often (not always) a relatively neutral form of data gathering about the experiences and effects of others. Put simply, sympathy points to a specific affective response in the manner of compassion or pity, whereas empathy thoroughly encompasses effects in general, including negative ones such as anger, fear, or resentment.

Every demonstration of empathy possesses some distinctive constituents at the phenomenal level, which differentiates it from sympathy, although sympathy possesses some of the qualities of empathy. Agosta (1984, 43-61) captures these distinctive constituents thus:

- A receptivity (openness) to the effects of others whether in a face-to-face encounter or as artifacts of human imagination. This is described as 'empathic receptivity.'
- An understanding of the other in which the other individual is interpreted as a possibility -a possibility of choosing, making commitments, and implementing them. This is described as 'empathic understanding.'
- An interpretation of the other from first, second, and third-person perspectives. This is described as 'empathic interpretation.'
- An articulation in language of this receptivity, understanding, and interpretation, including the form of speech known as listening, enables the other to appreciate that they have been the target of empathy. This is described as 'empathic listening.'

Agosta expatiates further the distinctive or essential constituents of empathy by using the biblical Good Samaritan, a very common parable told by Jesus to expose the true meaning of love. In terms of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan is emphatically receptive to the suffering of the traveler. This openness, argues Agosta, informs his understanding of the possibility that the other is a fellow traveler like himself. The other is thus interpreted as a neighbor (in the second person). This neighborliness is expressed in words and deeds by his stopping and altruistically giving assistance, concludes Agosta.

## **EMPATHY AND THE 'OTHER' MINDS DILEMMA**

The concept of empathy and the everydayness or practical worth of the concept has made scholars like Lipps (1979, 374) to claim that empathy should be understood as the primary means of gaining knowledge of other minds. This idea generated a lot of controversy and intellectual debate among philosophers at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century. Can a man really participate or share the feelings of the other? Is it really possible for one person to know what another is going through? How can one person truly understand the manner of thinking or the content of the thought of another without any prior conversation between the two? Is empathy, in fact, possibly? After all, man is a complex animal, complicated and unpredictable, and each man has no direct access to the minds of others. How then do we possibly know what others think or feel; how can we ever possibly share in their thought? In spite of the difficulties associated with agreeing with the reality of empathy, we are certainly convinced that we occasionally empathize with others. Consider the natural reaction that follows instinctively whenever you see a child fall badly to the ground while running; you wince and naturally surge forward to help the child. This already indicates that you somehow participate in the hurt or pain the child might be suffering as a consequence of the fall. The problem, however, concerns how to explain the possibility or otherwise of empathy convincingly.

Scholars over the years have identified two kinds of philosophical problems related to empathy. The first concerns how much men can participate in the mental states or emotions of other men. Here many epistemological questions arise concerning the nature of human thinking, the capacity of each man to think, the ability to participate in the mental states of others (if at all it does exist), is it natural- innate or acquired? If it does exist and it is innate, why are some more 'empathetic' than others? And even if it is acquired, at what age or state in life does a man acquire this capacity? Can this capacity to empathize be lost? Are those suffering from some levels of insanity capable of empathizing? Is empathy a function of the brain or somehow connected to consciousness such that we can say that those with a higher level of awareness are more empathetic than those with less?

The second kind of problem connected to empathy concerns ethics and society. Empathy seems to be a disposition bred into individuals by society. Hence, morally, it becomes integrated into men to share in the pains of other men. With the passage of time and custom, empathy assumed a natural order in human sub-consciousness such that empathizing may be compared to involuntary human routines like yawning and blinking. If this is the case, can empathy be said to have any moral worth even though it adds meaning to the life of the beneficiary? Can acting empathetically be considered a virtue since it can be argued to be a mere act of man, not a human act?

A number of philosophers have based their approaches to ethics on the notion of empathy. David Hume (1983, 29) was the first and the most influential to do so. Hume suggested that when we see others passing through one form of suffering or the other, in the act of imagining it, we experience the pain also. The drive toward empathy arises from this process. Hence, we naturally seek to alleviate the pains of others so far as we are aware of it. For Hume, therefore, empathy is a consequence of man's imagination of the suffering of his fellowmen.

What follows is a brief reflection of how some scholars grappled with the philosophical problems connected to empathy.

### **Edmund Husserl's view of Empathy**

Edith Stein(1989,19,38) had observed that in philosophy, the problem of other minds or the problem of empathy had been a topic of prolonged debate in eighteenth

and nineteenth-century German philosophy particularly. The problem of empathy is provided in the collection of research works written in 1912 by Edmund Husserl, now known as “Phenomenology and the Foundations of Sciences.” In the year 1929, Husserl arrived at what can be considered an answer to the paradox of the apparent acquaintance with the mind of the other. The phenomenological works of Husserl were intended to endow the intellectual community with a new method of philosophical grounding to lead scientists, academicians, and practitioners of various fields out of their alleged state of philosophical unconsciousness; ontological and epistemological state of non-awareness called the “natural attitude” by phenomenologists.

Husserl called the cognitive-affective process that constitutes the senses of others in our awareness “empathic presentation.” Empathic presentation is a technical term for the generation of empathic senses of other persons. However, these experiences are not seen as part of one’s own consciousness but felt as either real or imagined with one’s own consciousness. To Husserl, what an individual experiences as oneself are never the actual experiences, feelings, and motives of another consciousness.

The understanding of empathy by Husserl starts with a model of consciousness that rejects the ‘natural attitude’ assumptions that reify consciousness. For him (1981:298), all non-phenomenological approaches project the distorting natural attitude understanding. The attitude in his (1977, 29) consideration is for the purpose of bracketing all assumptions about oneself, others, culture, empirical psychology, and human nature. Husserl claimed it is possible to see the essence of our experience of others and finally decide on the conditions for the possibility of such an experience.

Husserl’s approach claimed that psychology should focus on consciousness, one’s own or that of others. For Husserl(1977, 39) the human science must focus on the specific subject of consciousness and other people. Such focus on empathy is central to initiating a philosophical reflection on “purified,” immanent experiences by excluding all that could be doubted and all that is specifically part of the surface, constituted feelings for others. One’s experience can be reflected on in a depersonalized and dissociated manner. The reduction allegedly produces a sphere of pure ownership that belongs wholly to oneself (Husserl 1977, 39).

De Boer(1978,46) posits that Husserl believed in the basic understanding of ourselves in relation to others. He captures this process thus:

1. In empathy, there is an understanding of a transposability of perspective. One person understands that two or more people each have appresentations, additions of senses, one to the other. It is also certain that one may well understand that others have a different view about something.
2. Consequently, it is assumed that we all participate in one world, co-constituting its meanings and objectives.
3. Mutual reciprocity exists with respect to the appresentations of “co-empathy” because empathy is a connection between people.
4. There is a single cultural world of shared appresentations of cultural world senses to objects at a fundamental level.
5. Through mutuality, transposability of senses is constituted the natural attitude. At the natural attitude level, the ordinary ontic level of understanding, each

individual has their own perspective and an illusion of privacy and separation from each other and the world. Human beings are complex interrelations of consciousness.

Husserl's philosophical process started with everyday experiences of empathy in all their forms, as stated in the five points above. By means of the transcendental reduction, it is alleged that an absolute sphere of immanent seeing is produced, in which it is possible to see essences of the constitution of the sense of other-self and the intersubjective constitution of all forms of meaning.

In Husserl's (1977, 49) studies of himself, in which he tried to lay aside all-natural attitude, cultural assumptions, his experiments led him to believe that this process involved the mutual and simultaneous appresentations of empathic meaning constituted through one's past. He(1977, 39) concluded that because of human beings' apperception of themselves as a unity of consciousness, their living bodylines, and their physical bodylines, they understand the physical bodies of others by immediately adding to them the sense of their own unity. After such addition, the other is felt to be other because they are physically over there and not me here.

### **Edith Stein's View of Empathy**

According to Stein (2008, 14,20), empathy is similar to perception in presenting something, the experiences of the other person, in an unmediated way, but dissimilar to perception and similar to other forms of experiences, such as imagination, in that the meaning content of the experience is not given directly to the empathizer. Stein uses the terms "original" or "non-original" to get hold of the distinction that something appears to consciousness. Regarding the "Gehalt" content of an act of consciousness that appears originally as opposed to non-original, the term Stein(2008, 15-20) often uses (as seen in the work of Husserl) to stress the first form is "leibhaftigenwartig" or "leibhaftiggeben," that is given in bodily presence.

Stein, in VendrellFerran's (2015, 481-502) thought, develops a phenomenological theory according to which certain types of feelings involve knowledge and judgments about things, persons, and situations in the world, notably about how they are to be evaluated and cherished. Stein's phenomenology of feelings and values is influenced deeply by Scheler's philosophy (Scheler, 2005, 23; 2008,16), but Colombetti(2014, 26) and Goldie(2000, 8, 12, 20) submit that it is also remarkably close to contemporary positions in cognitive science and analytical philosophy assigning fundamental importance to affectivity as concerns perception, knowledge and action.

Stein (2010, 26-27)begins with the feelings that are basic to all forms of perception and which involve bodily experience in a more obvious sense. These "sensual feelings" have not reached the cognitive level of fully formed judgment about the state of things in the world, but they display a kind of evaluation of the present state of the organism and its surroundings. Back to empathy, Stein (2008, 76) reserves a name for a fundamental form of phenomenon which she thinks was neglected: "sensual empathy." Sensual empathy is a process of recognition and understanding that takes place on the level of embodied existence when one lived body feels and

perceives the presence of another lived body and follows its experiences through in a spontaneous manner. This process was called the “field of sensation” by Stein (2008, 77), through which the “sensual feeling” protrude from the foreign lived body and draws one into its presence.

Stein did not discuss which features of sensual empathy are inborn and which are learned through experience. She often points out that she (2008, 76) is only interested in describing and understanding empathy from a phenomenological perspective and not explaining the phenomenon. Stein clearly is not interested in the empirical instantiations of which Husserl (1976, 176) referred to as pure consciousness; rather, her goal is to understand the coming together of nature and culture in a lived body that is simultaneously dependent on material process and free to act. She (2008, 116) referred to it as the contrast and unity between psychic (psychophysical), causality, and spiritual motivation. Stein (2008, 80) and Vendrel Ferran (2015, 481-502) do not distinguish feelings only as operating at a sensual or emotional level but, they can also be distinguished in relation to duration, reach, and intensity. As regards intensity, Stein (2010, 115) introduces life force mechanism to explain why certain feelings are felt with more or less energy.

Stein (2008, 79; 2010, 111) holds that in empathy, the character to which we should attend is not only our own but also that of the other person, which shows itself to us in the feelings expressed through actions. Therefore, what we get acquainted with through empathy is not only sensual feelings or emotions but also the personality of the person who is having the feelings or emotions. According to her (2008, 106-7), we, however, need to know the personality of the other person if we are to be able to follow and understand their in-depth experiences and, as a result of it, develop theirs and our own character in a way that accords with the hierarchy of ethical values.

### Contemporary View on Empathy

Contemporarily, scholars have continued to research the problems connected to empathy as a basic structure for human intersubjectivity. Parzuchowski (2015) is a notable mention here. According to Parzuchowski (2015, 40), our first task of improving our philosophical and anthropology, or our view of human nature, is to turn to the research in cognitive and social sciences. As social animals, we rely on the immediacy of reading and responding to behavioral cues, which are mostly apprehended by intuitions, or automatic cognitive processes, including emotions. The automatic process can accomplish necessary tasks much more efficiently than a controlled conscious process.

Parzuchowski (2015, 44-45) viewed empathy thus:

- i. Empathy is felt and expressed as a cognitive-affective experience, receptive and expressive of the body and its cognition, above and below conscious awareness.
- ii. Empathy is a form of perception and is bound up with other forms of perception.
- iii. Empathy as an experience and an expression is highly complex in that it intersects with a variety of other feelings, perceptions, and interpretations.
- iv. Empathy has powerful imaginative dimensions and capacities.

- v. Empathy's practical use and moral worth are contingent on the development of self, other distinctions, and regard for the feelings and rightful claim of others.

For him (2015, 48), the complexity of empathy means that one can feel conflicted and contrary empathic responses. An empathizer may not resonate with the subject's feelings as such. Empathy's cognitive-affective dimensions span a continuum of conscious and unconscious processes and are bound up with perception and our self-other differentiation. Empathy is complex, highly imaginative, and subject to the quality of our-self.

## A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE REALITY AND UNREALITY OF EMPATHY

The reality of empathy as an everyday human mode of being is indubitable yet problematic because it is practically almost impossible to prove the veracity of empathy logically. Nonetheless, a logical interpenetration of the pragmatic implications of the notion of 'empathy' reveals that the denial of the concept 'empathy' will always be a dilemma, and such an attempt will be paradoxical (self-contradictory). McNabb(2005)tells a short story that captures the paradox of any attempt to deny the reality of empathy: Tragically, Hector's father is involved in a car accident and dies. An acquaintance, Anita, her friend, tells him that she knows how it feels while driving home her sentiments of condolence to his friend. McNabb (2005) responds, "No, you don't know how I feel." After all, how could she know how he feels? She doesn't know what he is going through, what he is thinking, and how he is feeling. No one can actually know how the 'other' feel. From the analogy, McNabb demonstrates the paradox in the impossibility of empathy. He (2005) argues:

But if he [McNabb] claims that she [Anita] cannot know how he feels, he is necessarily making an assertion about how she feels! If it is true that one person cannot know how another person feels, then it follows that he cannot know how she feels, and hence, he cannot know that she does not know how he feels. His position is self-defeating. If he is right, he is wrong.

McNabb suggests that Hector's claim that Anita does not know how he feels is somewhat ambiguous. Does he mean that she does not know *exactly* how he feels? If so, he might think that no matter how she feels, it must be different than how he feels. Or does he mean that she has no idea how he feels? In other words, that she does not have an *adequate* understanding of his mental state. The general principles underlying these two interpretations of Hector's claim might be stated as follows:

1. It is impossible for one person to know the exact feelings of another person.
2. It is impossible for one person to understand the feelings of another person adequately.

McNabb (2005) concludes that regardless of which sort of claim (either 1 or 2 above) Hector is making, the logic of that claim falls apart. If Hector is making the first



sort of claim – that Anita does not know his precise feelings, then he should have some reason or justification for making such a claim. But what reason could he possibly give? After all, he is vehemently asserting that no one has epistemic access to anyone else’s mind. Therefore, he does not have access to her mind either. Apart from psychics, no one can look into another person’s mind and see exactly what is going on inside. Sadly, his only recourse would seem to be to appeal to the notion that since every person is unique, no two people can ever feel exactly the same way or understand precisely how the other feels.

It is a huge problem to deny or even doubt the fact that empathy is possible. This is because empathy is of preeminent value in the fields of ethics, medicine, and education. Even in the human routine, empathy is a core part of existence. That man is a relational being, a being-with, almost immediately suggests that he is destined or even fated to be empathetic. Take empathy away, and the whole moral ideals of selflessness, charity and love, tolerance, and the likes all crumble. Men would be pure egoists, and amoral sociopaths would have populated the world. Without empathy for others, it is not clear why we would ever be motivated by anything other than selfishness. Human existence would have been founded on something other than intersubjectivity or interrelationship, and such a ‘something,’ whatever it may have been, would have denied man access to the most symbolic aspect of his essence-emotion, empathy, sympathy. Empathy is almost synonymous with being human. To be empathetic is to be human.

On the other hand, science has proven beyond a reasonable doubt that no two persons are exactly identical and, the psychics apart, no human person is capable of penetrating the mind of others in order to gain knowledge of the content of their thought. This points to the indisputable fact that every human person is unique. It, therefore, raises critical questions on the possibility of empathy. McNabb (2005) rightly observes that “To presume to know how another person feels is to strip that person of his or her separateness and uniqueness. It is especially offensive to people who have been victims of one form of oppression or another when members of the privileged group claim to know how they feel”. If the human person truly knows how other humans feel in society, and is therefore driven to empathize with them, why the myriad injustices experienced in the world. Why is it now symptomatic in the contemporary world that people are growing less and less interested in the affairs of others? Does the idea of the uniqueness of a human person not mean that each person is so structured to be independent in thinking? So while it is practically undeniable to say that empathy is non-existent or impossible, it is even more difficult to accept the possibility and reality of empathy based on the idea of human uniqueness.

It must nevertheless be observed here that empathy can arguably be conceived as an integral relational structure bred into the human consciousness that is both deeply perceptive and transcendent. It is deeply perceptive because the human inclination to empathy is very reactional, sensitive, brazen, and almost involuntary. This is why as human persons, we sometimes find it very difficult not to react to or feel the pains of the other even when that ‘other’ is previously seen as an enemy. This is why the human person can be tolerant and forgiven. Consider occasions when we begin to feel pity to the extent of even offering ‘valuable’ assistance to some person(s) whom we may have

resented or had even prayed for some manner of evil to befall. This same attribute sometimes makes people feel pity and even plead for the safety of a proven outlaw who is subjected to grave torture or affliction. Hence, though we may not understand or be able to logically prove the reality of empathy, the fact of its existence is undeniable.

Empathy is transcendent in origin and application. It is transcendent in origin because it is something bred into us, an innate force that is sometimes beyond our control. It is also true that our feelings of empathy can appreciate and depreciate; no one can say that he or she acquires the skill to be empathetic at some point in his life. Empathy is a 'given'; its fundamental origin is transcendent; it emanates from a factor beyond man and functions through a process beyond man's conclusive rational account. Empathy is also transcendent because it forces man to live beyond the confines of his being and seek communion with fellowmen. Through empathy, man reaches his fellowman; he impacts on him through his kind presence and cherished assistance; he also benefits from the 'other' (the receptor of the empathetic aide) because each empathetic opportunity creates room for the renewal and reinvigoration of the self. There are power and strength in communion.

## EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

Edith Stein and Max Scheler both agreed with Lipps that empathy is foundational to aesthetic and social cognition. However, each had a different way of characterizing the role of empathy for social relations. Scheler (2005, 23) picks up Lipps insights by focusing on the moral and humanitarian implication of empathy, while Stein (2008) is more interested in how empathy helps us to understand each other in a deep, full-bodied, and possibly mystical way.

Parzuchowski (2015, 106) avers that, while Stein and Scheler agree that there is no fusion of subjects in empathy, Stein focused more on characterizing the "I" through Husserl's work. However, empathy is vital to our apprehension, understanding, and reaction to events. According to Parzuchowski (2015, 123), it is vital to our sociality, and its accuracy is based on multiple internal and external factors to the subject, just like all forms of perception. The relationship between an individual and her society requires a mutually attentive relationship. For him (2015, 123), without the efforts of moral cultivation, empathy has the potential to facilitate the darker tendencies in human behavior. He (2015, 124) further submits that, because empathy is the confluence of a perceptual and intuitive process that facilitates our understanding of ourselves and our social world, it is important to ensure that it is operating optimally. If it is not, then it is necessary to perform a corrective necessary to improve its skillfulness and aptitude.

The paper makes the following observations. Firstly, empathy is different from sympathy. While empathy necessarily includes a show of sympathy, sympathy is limited and may not necessarily be empathetic. Sympathy is a reaction to a purely negative situation, while empathy is a consoling and nourishing presence to the 'other' in both negative and positive situations. The second is that empathy is a pure act of consciousness, although its application may sometimes transcend the logic of human

rationality. This implies that the insane may not be able to be empathetic, depending on the level of their insanity. Yet, even those who are sane may not be able to account for some manner of empathy they display to some ‘others,’ especially those whom they may have, at some point, consider as enemies. Thirdly, empathy is a natural relational structure or attribute with a transcendental origin. This is the reason for the difficulty in proving the possibility and practical truth of empathy logically.

The fourth is that empathy is innate and common to all men. However, the empathetic ability can appreciate or depreciate in different individuals depending on their dispositions to life. Fifth, the human everydayness, his routine, proves the veracity of empathy; this routine may sometimes defy logical explanations. Finally, the most logical argument used to argue for the impossibility of empathy is the uniqueness of individuals. This logic, however, collapses when placed side by side with everydayness. Hence, it is always paradoxical to argue for the impossibility of empathy.

## CONCLUSION

The paper demonstrated that empathy is a significant part of human existence in the universe. Although pertinent issues border on the logical practicability of empathy, it will always be self-contradictory to argue for the impossibility of empathy. The human person is a conscious being. And as Husserl once affirmed, every act of consciousness is a consciousness of something. Among all other things that man as a conscious being is aware of, his fellow human person- the ‘other’ stands out. If man is conscious of his existence and the existence of other entities in the world, it will be self-contradictory to argue that he is not conscious of the existence of other beings who share the same nature and purpose with him. Moreover, if it is agreed that he is conscious of the existence of his fellowmen, it will be very improper to say that such a consciousness is not empathetic even though each human person is unique. Thus, the paper submits that empathy is a core relational structure bred into the human person that enables him to transcend beyond himself and engage in a conscious, empathetic fellowship of purpose with the other rational ‘selves’ in the world.

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