What can Collingwoods Re-enaction and Stuebers Reenactive Empathy Be?

Introduction

The British philosopher and historian Robert George Collingwood used the notion of *re-enactment* of historic actions as a way of gaining knowledge of the human mind and self. The German philosopher Karsten R. Stueber used *reenactive empathy* as distinction between the human and the natural sciences. In this seminal paper I question what kind of knowledge can be gained by ideas like thinking the same thought, enacting the same situation and imagining being in the other's situation. Drawing on concepts of enaction and empathy by philosophers from a phenomenological and interaction theory tradition I show difficulties that arise from such notions of understanding human agents.

I do not focus the main string of arguments of Collingwood and Stueber about differences in the approaches of natural and human sciences, but merely react to a notion implied in their terms *re-enaction* and *reenactive empathy*, which seem to suggest that we can do what others did or feel what others felt.

I try to delimit what *re-enactment* and *reenactive empathy* can be and what kind of knowledge can be gained by use of these concepts. I question if they give an advantage above other ways of recognizing, reacting and responding which don't imply the notion of doing what the other does.

On Collingwood

Collingwood in *Human Nature and Human History* in 1936 emphasized a difference for humans in knowing nature and knowing themselves, which therefore require different scientific methods for both of these realms of knowledge.

Understanding nature in his view requires focussing on existing things and events, organizing them in types and finding interrelations, which are defined as laws of nature. Philosophers like John Locke and David Hume in the seventeenth and eighteenth century perfected the methods of natural science relying on experience and observation and analogically used them for understanding the human mind. Immanuel Kant on the other hand claimed a demonstrative science for natural as well as for human science. Collingwood judges these attempts in scientific research of human nature as false and having failed in understanding human understanding. He does not believe in a principal

impossibility of mind to know itself, nor in the underdevelopment of psychological insight as a reason for this failure, but that "[...] the 'science of human nature' broke down because its method was distorted by the analogy of the natural sciences." (Collingwood p.20).

Collingwood proposes a different approach for a science of human nature inspired by a recent attempt of understanding human history. The critical and constructive method in the modern conception of history developed in the nineteenth century in his view laid the path to a new and more adequate form of understanding human affairs that cannot be reached by other methods. "[…] whereas the right way of investigating nature is by the methods called scientific, the right way of investigating mind is by the methods of history" (ibid. p.21).

Understanding all natural processes as historical processes for him would be taking the approach to far, even if Evolution theory and modern physics agree that even seemingly eternal categories are subject to constant change. "But just as history is not the same as change, so it is not the same thing as 'timefulness'." (ibid. p.23).

"All history is the history of thought." (ibid. p.26). For Collingwood ordinary historians treat history as the history of human affairs by interpreting documents in which humans have expressed their thoughts. Their interest are actions, events of unity between their *outside*, observable movements, and their *inside*, the reconstructed thought expressed in it. Since this twofoldedness does not to arise in natural events, for Collingwood this form of research is the major difference in the approach of human and the natural sciences.

This reconstruction or interpretation of thoughts of historical agents is achieved by historians by "[…] thinking themselves into an action, rediscovering the thoughts of agents, penetrating from the outside to the inside of the event, rethinking them in their own mind." (ibid. p.25f).

"[…] all history […] is the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's own mind." (ibid. p.26).

Re-enactment therefore is not mere ascertainment of someone else's thought, but more so critical and if necessary correcting evaluation of past thought.

The object of such re-enactment are past thoughts that, while being events happening in time, through re-thinking in following times themselves are not mere objects in time, but lived through experiences of others. Interestingly Collingwood here himself draws the analogy to mathematical knowledge like the the Pythagoras theorem to show that, although experienced by another in another time, the thought rcan emain exactly the same. (cf. ibid p.28f).

Since all thoughts that reach us are thoughts from the past, he believes critical re-enactment to generally be the only method for understanding the mind of others and even of past thoughts of ourselves. For him all knowledge of mind is historical knowledge, and knowledge of action always also involves investigating the act of gaining knowledge.

"The only way in which I can know my own mind is by performing some mental act or other and then considering what the act is that I have performed." (ibid. p.29).

The false claim of mental scientists was to know what mind is, was and always will be. This would "[…] bind posterity within limits [...]" by "[…] supposed laws of mind itself [...]", while his historic method does not claim to foretell future developments (cf. Ibid. p.31).

Collingwood concedes another way of knowing minds may be claimed, a scientific knowledge of mind which tries to understand the structure which determines mental functions without dealing with specific contents (cf. ibid. p.31), but cautions that mind can only be studied in its activities and rejects ideas of an underlying mental substance as metaphysical speculation. Would this approach stay limited on positively detecting patterns of activity, its generalizations would be useless for historical knowledge, since for him nothing seems to be gained by comparing and generalizing actions, which are not perceived as is the material of natural science, but understood in a critical historical way (cf. ibid. p.32). He denies such an approach the possibility to produce informative output beyond the examined phases of history with their special conditions. "It will never be a non-historical science of the mind." (ibid. p.34).

Collingwood also wants to reduce the roll of Psychology to investigating psychic elements (sensations, feelings, appetites a.o.), which he sees as basis of rational life (thought, will a.o.) but not part of it (cf. ibid p.40).

Historical knowledge, as Collingwood designs it, is a keeping in touch with something that is still there and kept alive by integrating it into the present and developing it by critical historical thinking (cf. ibid p.35).

Collingwood states that while on the natural level humans cannot profit from the experience of others, in the sphere of mental life they can and do. While scientific explanation of mind must remain limited, historical thinking can come to an understanding of human actions by not only describing but by re-enacting, analysing and criticizing them.

On Stueber

Stueber in his article "Understanding vs. Explanation" in 2011 discusses the methodological division in the approaches of natural sciences on one hand and human/social sciences on the other along the line of explanation and understanding. "we explain nature, but understand the life of the soul" (Dilthey in Stueber p.17). Since recent discourse shows that causal why-questions play a part in the humanities, as well as understanding has become a goal for natural sciences, Stueber questions if this can still be useful for their distinction.

He however argues that *explanatory understanding* of human rational agency is epistemically distinct from other forms of explanation (cf. ibid. p.18). While natural sciences construct a detached third person perspective on their object, the human sciences, relying on the concept of *folk psychology,* understand and explain from an engaged second person perspective. This approach in his view is based on the human capacity of *reenactive empathy* and a psychological manner of understanding. Two competitors of his approach, a non-psychological hermeneutic concept of understanding and the view that narratives play the decisive roll in this question for Stueber both do not succeed in marking the necessary distinction between human and natural sciences (cf. ibid. p.18f). The hermeneutic insight that facts of significance can only be understood within a larger whole, as well as the embedding factor of narrations are valid far beyond the limits of human agency. So both in his view do not provide us with a unique mode of comprehension. With narratives Stueber rather finds the distinctive quality in their involving a capacity for *reenactive empathy* than in their use as a means of distinction in itself. A narrative may be central for understanding someone particular as an agent, but it can be used as a form of presentation with any subject, also for third person scientific accounts.

Human sciences according to Stueber deal with rational agents who act for reasons (cf. ibid. p.26). In *folk psychology* individual mental states embedded in a larger context lead to rational actions of self aware and reflective agents. Inner states like beliefs and desires, as well as outer states of the world are reflected, combined and understood as reasons for acting. This requires awareness of one's desires and the ability to take an attitude towards them (cf. Frankfurt in Stueber p.27), which allows to take ownership of an action. Rational agency includes the belief that an agent can adequately consider own desires as well as affordances of the natural world including shared normative commitments and needs of the social surroundings and the other agents.

Since the theory theory view of having an implicit theory about all the rules that would have to be considered seems unlikely to Stueber, he relies on the simulation theory approach, the capacity to put oneself in the others shoes (cf. ibid p.28). Imagining oneself in the situation of others and trying to reenact their thoughts, beliefs and considerations for him seems to be a less complicated, a more applicable and convincing way of gaining understanding of the reasons for acting of others. Stueber believes that we make actions of others intelligible to us by imagining what our reasons for acting in their situation would be and if we would probably act likewise if we were them in their situation. Influences coming from our own situation thereby have to be consciously put aside.

Enaction

On a very basic level the enactive approach relies on core concepts such as embodiment, experience, autonomy, sense making and others. Autonomy here means bringing forth an own domain while embedded in a larger surrounding. Sense making here means regulating interaction and transforming the experienced world into a salient, meaningful environment. "Sense-making is the interactional and relational side of autonomy." (Thompson and Stapelton p.25). Consequently this approach does not imply internalism or externalism for cognition, but rather sees it as a relational process between a system and its environment. Cognition and emotion are thereby not treated as separate but as one integrated embodied way of being and interacting (ibid. p.25-27).

Enaction theory is intended to build a bridge between mind in science and mind in experience. As contrast to widespread assumptions that cognition is a representation of an independently existing world in an independently existing mind, it focusses cognition as embodied action of agents who find a pre-given world of which they are part of and with and in which they interact. Following the path of Maurice Merleau-Ponty this approach tries to consider the body both in its experiential dimension and in its roll as milieu of cognitive mechanisms (cf. Varela et. al. p.Ixii).
Mind is not an a-historical 3rd person view from above, but part of an active and passive connection of an engaged agent in the world. 3rd person perspectives, as often taken in the natural sciences, are constructs, commonly developed from intersubjective experience by agents. They are so not truth or reality but the outcome of reflective debates of influential groups. As such the concept of mind is highly influenced and constantly transformed by new found scientific constructs such as machinery and computantional models of mind (cf. ibid. p.6).

Models for self reflection have always been influenced by artefacts and machinery built at the time: the biblic Adam was built from the perspective of pottery, in the 18th century humans were thought in analogy to clockworks, Freuds drive dynamics were modeled after steam engines and todays cognitive sciences broadly conceptualize human brain action as the data processing of computers (cf. Liessmann p.51f).

Folk psychology, supposedly commonsensely agreed upon pre-reflective understanding of others by attributing to them inner mental states like beliefs and desires, can such be seen as a debatable philosophical position (cf. Ratcliffe p.3). Since Folk psychology literature gives little detailed description of social experiences, it may only fit social scenarios into their terms of supposed inner mental states (cf. ibid. p.26).

Interpersonal Enaction Theory

> "The first-person point of view on the world is never a view from nowhere; it is always defined
> by the situation of the perceiver's body, which concerns not simply location and posture, but
> action in pragmatic contexts and interaction with other people. Pre-reflective self-awareness
> includes aspects that are both bodily and intersubjective." (Gallagher and Zahavi 2021)

According to Husserl the intersubjective experience of a shared world lays the ground for the constitution of ourselves and others as separate experiencing subjects in an objectively existing time and space (cf. Husserl p.170-172).

We start the interpersonal experience in the natural attitude with the unconscious belief that a being that looks and behaves like myself perceives things from a egocentric viewpoint as I do. Without the need to draw an inference from ourselves own experience, we perceive them similarizingly. We *appresentate* the world and the other and can imagine ourselves in their shoes and perceive from their perspective. Subtracting this alter-ego from experience we abstract and constitute our ownness and personal ego (ibid. p.188f).

This analysis shows a given connectedness with others on a very basic level of existence. Social interaction then allows us to develop differentiated full personhood with abilities, character traits, interest a.o. (Gallagher and Zahavi 2021) The phenomenologically founded basic connectedness however does not ensure an ability to mutually understand the cognitive and emotional dispositions of others in all their developed branches and twigs.

Interaction theory proposes an alternative for understanding of others than meant by the idea of empathy. It points out the impossibility of grasping others in their *full blodded agency*, including

unconscious background feelings and irrational influences. Attempts to reach this may rather lead to an usurpation of others agency than to an actual understanding of others (cf. Goldie p.303, Slaby p.251-254). Instead, it proposes, others can be understood without perspective shifting by engaging with them on the level of action in joint world-orientation (cf. Slaby p.255).

Interpersonal enaction can therefore only be present embodied corresponsive joint active engagement and agency.

Empathy

The term *empathy* can be traced back to a re-translation of the German word Einfühlung used by Theodor Lipps as translation from the English *sympathy* used by David Hume. Jan Slaby quotes Adam Smith as an influence on Hume and points out the major unclarity, whether the term is meant to cover sophisticated cognitive processes of imagination and projection, or "becoming the other" (cf. Slaby p.250).

> "By imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something, which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them" (Smith in Slaby p.250).

In Theory of Mind based approaches empathy bridges a supposed gap between individuals either through theorizing about the other or through simulation. Following de Vignemont and Singer sufficient conditions for empathy are:

- one is in an affective state
- this state is isomorphic to another person's state
- this state is elicited by the observation or imagination of another persona's affective state
- one knows that the other person is the source of one's own affective state (de Vignemont and Singer in Gallagher 2012, p.358)

While some plead for a broad use of the term, others suggest to use *empathy* only for specific processes like high-level simulation, a "complex (that is cognitive and affective) imaginative processes in which an observer simulates another persons psychic state while maintaining self-other differentiation." (Coplan in Slaby p.251), or "states that exemplify substantial isomorphism to those of their targets." (Goldman p.42).

Theory theorists argue that humans pre-scientifically develop a body of knowledge about their intentional states and how they influence our actions and then apply it to others, which they consider to be similar.

Simulation theorists, assuming individuals to be sufficiently similar, believe to have found a more economic way in using oneself as a model to explain and predict others by putting oneself in their place and adopting their perspective.

Both approaches construe *empathy* as an imaginative process that tries to reproduce states of mind of others and distinguish it from other feelings towards or in response to others.

Influential philosophers agree with different wording on a division of understanding others at a primitive and a more confined level. Alvin Goldman calls this low-level and higher level mind-reading or re-constructive empathy, Collingwood deals with biological actions that he names *non-historical* and and *historical human actions* that are understood with the historical method via re-enactment of past thoughts, Stueber distinguishes *basic empathy* (cf. Stueber in Goldie p.304) and *reenactive empathy*.

Peter Goldie differentiates *more or less non-conscious resonance* and *perspective shifting*.

He strongly opposes *empathetic perspective shifting*, imagining being the other, which he proves to conceptually fail outside of very primitive cases, in which correct predictions can be made by even largely uninformed and insensitive persons. In these base cases there are no relevant differences between Person A and B, no relevant nonrational influences, significant confusions and psychological conflicts that influence B in a relevant way (Goldie p.307).

Beyond such base cases psychological aspects play a decisive role. Character traits, abilities and emotional dispositions highly influence rational decisions and are part of an engaged *full-blooded agency.* Their passive influence on actions from a tacit background cannot be reproduced by another person, which is why *empathetic perspective shifting* can never reach another person's experiential reality (cf. Slaby p.249).

Goldie however accepts *in-his-shoes perspective-shifting,* an act of imagination, where one consciously and intentionally imagines what it would be like to be in the other's situation (Goldie p.302).

According to Theory of Mind mental states of others that cause their behaviour are principally unobservable and must be inferred from other sources. Folk Psychology tries to explain how humans understand and predict other people's behaviour by imposing intentional states like beliefs

and desires on them without or before scientific support. While Folk Psychology is often introduced as universal innate or learned theory, Matthew Ratcliffe profoundly criticises it for being not as commonsensical as proposed. He shows belief/desire psychology as a philosophical position that incorporates assumptions that are questionable, and do not adequately describe human interaction (cf. Ratcliffe p.22).

The phenomenological tradition emphasizes the basic connectedness and incomplete seperation of individuals. Husserl preferred the term *Fremderfahrung*, since with *Einfühlung* it "[…] remains unclear whether the term is meant to designate the projection of one's own self into a foreign body, or rather the actual encounter with a foreign embodied self." (Husserl in Zahavi p.290).

While some proponents accept ideas like "transferring oneself, so to say, into the other individual's psyche; that is by empathy." (Jaspers 1968, p.1313), others point out that perspective shifting cannot reach the other's experiential reality in their *full-blooded-agency* (cf. Slaby p.252).

Empathetic understanding in a phenomenological view is not reduced to same feelings, but also includes similar and corresponding feelings. "In either case, however, our emotional reaction is exactly that – a reaction." (Zahavi p.291).

Re-Enaction

If enacting is being and taking part in the world, it can also be interaction with facts and traces from history, as are documents of events and narrations of actions taken by agents in former times. Other than in interpersonal common enaction with present others, trying to understand their reasons for acting is a one way street, since one's ideas and actions cannot be received, understood and reacted to from the other side.

Following Goldie's analysis it is impossible to reach the other's experiential reality in its *full blooded agency*. So, what is meant by the notion of re-enaction?

For Collingwood re-enactment is a way for historians to understand historic events with their outside and inside, the thought expressed in an action. He does not promote that they try to be the historic agent, but believes it to be possible for them to rationally rediscover the exact thought and rethink it in their own mind by reconstructing and interpreting them (cf. Collingwood p.25f). The model for the possibility of thinking the same thought through the ages he takes the mathematical theorem of Pythagoras. While however the fact that Pythagoras discovered this geometrical relation is a historical act, the relation itself is not. It is an example for a relation from natural sciences,

where personal dispositions of agents play only a subordinated role. Still there are always some dispositions that do play a role, as there are cognitive abilities and interests as well as support of their surroundings. So there seems to be at least a blurred boundary with thoughts, as to who is capable of rethinking them.

Collingwood acknowledges that re-enactment is not just re-thinking someone else's thought, but active, constructive and critical thinking (cf. ibid. p.20,26). When he states that re-enactment can even be an opportunity to correct errors in the past thoughts in the context of the present knowledge, it becomes obvious that it is not only an attempt to understand from the agents perspective, but an evaluation from a second persons view. He thereby leaves the path of *thinking the same thought* and rightfully declares that "All thinking is critical thinking; the thought that re-enacts past thoughts, therefore criticizes them in re-enacting them." (ibid. p.26). He however does not take in account the possibility of errors that may as well arise from such evaluations from a distance.

Re-enaction as *thinking oneself into past action* (cf. ibid. p.25) seems to fall back to reacting to known parts of actions and imaginatively reconstructing an agent's supposed situation and rational motives. It however cannot even be a repetition of the rational enacting of agents of the past in the same way as re-thinking of Pythagoras theorem can be thinking the same thought.

An action is a much more complex entity than a law of geometrical relations. It remains questionable, if there can be one undisputable rational thought expressed in an action. There will always be a lack of information. The actively constructed inside of an action can only be a chosen part of known and imagined influences on an agent. A result of such an attempt to understand agents and actions will always be an interpretation taken from a certain perspective by someone not fully involved in the situation.

Collingwood very broadly states that critical re-enactment were the only method for understanding the mind of others and also of ourselves (ibid. p.29f) . He concedes that there are non-rational influences on agents, but believes it possible to keep them apart from historical understanding.

Reenactive Empathy

"[…] human sciences deal primarily with rational agents who act for reasons" (Stueber p.26). As Collingwood with re-enaction, so also Stueber limits his attempt of *reenactive empathy* to an understanding of others in the human sciences to their *rational agency*, thus abstracting from trying

to understand full agency by leaving out irrational influences and the emotional background of agents.

If re-enaction shows to be something else than repeating the same action by someone else, and empathy turns out as something else than feeling what the other feels, how can reenactive empathy be a way of gaining a better understanding of rational agents of the past? When no direct interaction with agents is possible, what is gained by the idea of *empathetically reenacting* their action over thinking about, resonating with, reacting to and evaluating it from a second person perspective?

By focussing on the personal involvement of an agent and imagining oneself in their shoes, reenactive empathy tries to enrich the understanding of rational agents by using the human similarity between an agent of the past and the person trying to gain understanding. Hereby arises the difficulty that there are always similarities and differences at the same time. It is as unclear where to draw the line between the agents in the realm of high level psychological traits, as well as between influential basic human features and complex traits involved in an action.

Collingwood finds it uninformative to re-enact what he calls *non-historical actions* that follow interests and appetites of humans animal nature (cf. Collingwood 27), although the biological similarity between agents of the past and the present (e.g. both have a need of food) and influences on their actions are most obvious. But of course such appetites, as e.g. hunger, may well be an substantial influence on actions that have to be considered historical in Collingswood's sense. Stueber identifies empathetic understanding of actions with finding them rationally compelling, although we can also imagine performing and simulating actions of which we only have minimal awareness, (cf. Stueber p.27f) e.g.: Why did you kick that leaf of a tree? Because I can.

Alvin Goldman describes *high-level mindreading* as a process where "'pretend' thoughts, beliefs, or desires (or the same entertained hypothetically)—are 'fed into' specific subpersonal mechanisms" and then used to form predictions and explanations (cf. Goldman in Hutto et. al.).

Stueber, trying to understand another person, wants to "[…] grasp his thoughts as reasons for his actions by putting ourselves in his shoes, by imagining the situation that he faces and trying to reenact his thought process in our mind." (Stueber p.28).

What can the empathetically reenacted experience of others in their situation without the possibility of direct interaction be? It will always be something different from what the agents experienced.

Similarities and differences are supposed from a second person perspective. Personal situations of agents are imagined by another in another situation from a different background and purposefully re-constructed by using a cognitive process enriched by bio-psycho-physical simulation.

Peter Goldie strongly objects to mistake such attempts of *in-his-shoes perspective-shifting* with empathetic-perspective Shifting, an attempt *to be the other* and gaining knowledge about how it is to be the other. Integrating and fitting the other in one's context may even turn away from the other's experience and to one's own. This conceptual problem may exist not only in complex simulations, but also, less obvious, in base cases (cf. Goldie p.302).

Conclusion

So reenactive empathy turns out to be an attempt of an agent of the present to understand an action of the past by enriching the collected knowledge about the action by imagining thoughts and feelings of agents of the past who performed the action. By using supposed similarities and consciously cutting out influences of supposed differences agents of the present believe to add important information for grasping a fuller meaning of an event of the past. At the same time agents of the present must not forget that this attempt is undertaken from their perspective with their knowledge and thus remains their interpretation and response to the event. This critical reaction and evaluation of a past action may lead to insights not possible at the time, but also to major distortions in the understanding, as influences of the time may be unknown, misjudged or overseen. Unlike in understanding a present other, with historic agents we unfortunately cannot dialogically compare and prove our ideas.

It remains questionable if the very thought expressed by an action can ever be clearly identified. Understanding of historical actions is always about thoughts that were supposedly expressed. So it may not be understanding of agents of the past and the thoughts they expressed in the action, but more so fitting them into one's own present terms and framework. The *critical re-enactment* may so not only lead to correction of errors, as Collingwood hoped, but may as well add new errors. As it cannot be the repetition of the enacting of the agent of the past it must remain the response from the second person perspective of the agent of the presence.

Can the claim that re-thinking the Pythagoras theorem by another in another time is thinking the exactly same thought (cf. Collingwood p.28f) as well be made for understanding a complex action of Julius Caesar (cf. ibid. p.26, p.28f)? How can we identify thoughts expressed in an action? To

discover them (cf. ibid. p.25), do we have to know the thought beforehand? Can we discover new thoughts in an action that we haven't already had? In complex actions the thought expressed will always be different or more than we can grasp of it. The supposedly discovered thought may always be something else than what was expressed in an event.

Collingwood states that knowledge of our minds involves investigating the act of knowing (cf. ibid. p.29). When he writes "If I want to know what powers my mind possesses as yet unexplored, for example, whether I can write poetry, I must try to write some, and see whether it strikes me and others as being the real thing." This is a statement about finding out about the powers of one's mind but not about having the power or expressing oneself by writing poetry. As the function of a bicycle in a shed may be there but can only be tested when put to action, there may be potential powers of a mind that can be there without ever being put to action. Also humans may well do something and understand what they are doing without analysing the process of doing it. In a sense we even lose something of the quality of an action, if we step back and reflect on it. There may be other forms of knowledge about human minds than historical knowledge gained by trying to understand agents of the past.

Stueber criticizes that MacIntyre doesn't explain how knowledge of the context through narratives informs us about the reason of an action. He believes that they provide us with information for reenacting a persons reasons and thoughts (cf. Stueber, p.26). Stuebers conclusion seems to be by putting oneself in the other's shoes, by imagining how we would react in the other's situation, or comparing if we would act likewise in their situation, even if there are always things that we don't know about the other (ibid, p.29). Beliefs, feelings, thoughts are developed by each person with their experiencing the world. So our imagination of the experience of others can only be an idea.

Stueber believes that we need reenactive empathy to gain adequate understanding in human sciences. But of course there are other important forms of understanding of historical processes that can come from a different perspective than the agents, e.g. from a second person that is affected by an action.
Or we can understand the impact of an action from the perspective of the presence, e.g. on the climate, that agents of the did not think of or did not understand. We can understand human agency involved without reenactive empathy.

Collingwood and Stueber both think that sameness of humans gives us a unique possibility of understanding human agents and actions, that we do not have with other objects of our desire to gain knowledge. While it may be more difficult to shift our perspective in the base of a rock, we can perform what is meant by reenactive empathy also with animals. My cats play with each other, hiding behind doors in tense immovability, waiting to attack as the other walks by. I can try to shift my perspective in their paws, but of my simulating will always suffer from a lack of information. So this special form of understanding may not be restricted to human agents. But it is easy for most of us to understand their intention and imagine their feelings without perspective shifting.

Most of our understanding of the world and others we gain through experiencing, interacting and cooperating with others in the same world. As seen in Husserl the understanding of this same world is given to us through the experience of others as subjects. I agree that we can gain additional ideas and feelings by performing actions like simulation of others. But if, as in the context of historical or distant agents, we cannot dialogically clarify with the other if we understood well, we can never be sure how much our ideas and feelings have to do with their intentions and experience.

Ideas of thinking the same thought and consenting on the relevance of events on an action have to be agreed upon between agents. Otherwise they remain only a partial ideas about the situation of the other from a second person perspective that should not be hidden by terms like re-enaction and reenactive empathy, which transport the notion of crossing a bridge to someone who is not there. Maybe the difficulty of fully understanding human agency, in analogy to the historic idea of full knowledge in the natural sciences, can be overcome by dropping the idea of complete knowledge in both areas.

While attempts to understand others by perspective shifting are an important possibility to gain ideas and prejudices about others, it is important to keep in mind that, while supposing to gain better understanding of others, they may as well lead away from understanding others and rather integrate and fit them into one's own framework.

Understanding from a second person perspective and, if possible, direct dialogical interaction provide us with rich access to the experience of others. Re-enaction, empathy and reenactive empathy, even if they are concededly not trying to be attempts *to be the other*, rely on simulation, a conscious imaginative process that reconstructs a situation in an as-if attitude. The terms perspective shifting and simulation seem to be clear descriptions for such attempts. It is unclear to me what is added by use of the terms re-enaction and reenactive empathy.

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