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SHARED EMOTIONS – A SCHELERIAN APPROACH

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1) *Emotional Sharing*

THE English predicate “sharing” or “to share” and its equivalent in other natural languages (“condividere”, “teilen”, “partager”, etc.) is of common usage in everyday talks, and its meaning is sufficiently clear in many linguistic contexts. For instance, one can share a concrete object: siblings (when they manage to!) can share a toy. Similarly, one can share abstract entities with others: two persons can share a right, say, the right of way about a certain passage. But entities of a perhaps more bizarre ontological status also seem apt to be shared, e.g., several persons can share a debt. In all these contexts, the idea conveyed by that predicate appears to be that there is one entity that is owned by a plurality of individuals.

But can mental states be shared? Is it possible to share beliefs, intentions or emotions? Over the last 20 or 30 years, one can observe a growing interest in what has been labeled “collective intentionality”² – that is, towards the problem of *if* and, in that case, *how* intentional attitudes can be shared by a plurality of individuals. It should come as no surprise that one of the most intensively debated issues is exactly the question of whether or not the notion of sharing, when it comes to “shared” experiences, has to be taken in the sense in which it is used in everyday conversation. Put differently, the question is whether sharing an experience implies that there is literally one *experience* that is owned by several individuals.

Generally, the debate about this question has been restricted to cases of shared intentions, where “intention” points to a particular conative attitude to be aligned with wishes, desires, etc. There are many good rea-

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² Cf. D.P. SCHWEIKARD, H.B. SCHMID, *Collective Intentionality*, in E.N. ZALTA (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford 2012.

sons for approaching the question about collective intentionality from this particular angle. Perhaps one of them can be traced back to Max Weber and to his idea that groups are individuated by their actions: if that is the case, then one has to first explain what it means for members of a group to share an intention, in order to make sense of collective actions, i.e., of actions performed by a group.³ In addition, intentions can be quite easily modeled by a functionalist approach to the mind, which makes the process that leads the social scientist to “ascribe” intentions to an individual or to a social group public, testable and subject to scientific scrutiny.

Things are more complex in the case of emotions – and this is mainly because they have a phenomenological dimension that makes them fairly recalcitrant to a purely functionalist approach. If one emotes, one *feels* something: arguably, emotions seem to be intrinsically qualitative states, to the effect that an essential component of their description would be lost were this qualitative aspect not to be taken into consideration. Thus, the first person perspective and the specific “what it is like to have an emotion” cannot be overthrown as easily as functionalists would like them to be.⁴ But, if one understands emotions in this way, it is easy to see how one can end up in an intricate dilemma as soon as one tries to account for *shared* emotions.

On the one hand, many would contest the possibility for affective attitudes to be shared in the very first place – for what on earth could it mean to share an emotion on this specific understanding of emotions? If having an emotion is feeling that emotion, then *who* would feel *what* in a collective emotion? The risk here is to postulate that there is an entity, a group, over and above individuals, that feels that emotion, but this idea of a collective subject, it might be contended, is ontologically spooky and phenomenologically incorrect. It is ontologically spooky because such an alleged subject would be a sort of disembodied mind, somehow floating over and above the individual minds. It is

³ Cf. H.B. SCHMID, D.P. SCHWEIKARD, *Einleitung: Kollektive Intentionalität. Begriff, Geschichte, Probleme*, in H.B. SCHMID and D.P. SCHWEIKARD (edd.), *Kollektive Intentionalität. Eine Debatte über die Grundlagen des Sozialen*, Frankfurt 2009, 11-68.

⁴ Cf. B. HUEBNER, *Genuinely Collective Emotions*, «European Journal for Philosophy of Science», 1-1 (2011), 89-118.

phenomenologically incorrect because the idea of a group mind would imply that the individual minds are fused together and, consequently, that the fused individuals would have immediate access to the mind of the other individuals *from within*. If the *we* encompasses you and me in a fusional way, then all *our* attitudes should be accessible to me, and that arguably implies that I should be able to access your mind (or those mental states that you share with me) from within, as well. But this is untenable: only you can have access to your experiences *from within*.

And, yet, if one rules out the possibility of shared emotion based on these considerations, how can one explain the many phenomenological facts that seem to testify to the possibility for individuals to, indeed, share an emotion? To present one particularly vivid example, imagine two parents standing beside the dead body of their beloved child. As the concern for the dead child is exactly the same for the two of them (it is *their* child after all), both parents feel the emotion of mourning *together*. Accordingly, it seems plausible to describe this situation as follows: «[t]hey feel in common the “same” sorrow, the “same” anguish. It is not that A feels this sorrow and B feels it also and moreover that they both know they are feeling it. No, it is a *feeling-in-common*».⁵

This scenario is depicted by Max Scheler, who with an unprecedented accurateness describes the many ways in which our affective life can assume a social dimension and, in certain cases, be shared: call the forms of sociality that experiences can display “forms of togetherness” (*Arten des Miteinanderseins*).⁶ When it comes to emotional sharing, Scheler’s investigations are crucial for at least two reasons. First, one can hardly overestimate the impact that his insights had for social phenomenology – basically all phenomenologists working on social ontology (“soziale Ontologie”)⁷ take Scheler as a pivotal point of orientation, either for criticizing some of his ideas (e.g., his notion of a

⁵ Cf. M. SCHELER, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, GW VII, 23 ff. Eng. trans. by P. Heath, *The Nature of Sympathy*, New Jersey, 1954, 12 ff.

⁶ Cf. M. SCHELER, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik. Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus*, GW II, 529.

⁷ For the history of this term and concept within phenomenology cf. A. SALICE, *Social Ontology as Embedded in the Tradition of Phenomenological Realism*, in M. SCHMITZ, B. KOBOW, H.B. SCHMID (edd.), *The Background of Social Reality*, Dordrecht 2013, 217-32.

collective person)⁸ or for revising others (e.g., the society/community distinction).⁹ Secondly, his work might help to shed light on the systematic problems that arise in relation to the idea of emotional sharing. Scheler not only believes that emotional sharing is a genuine phenomenon, which is what the example of the mourning parents is supposed to illustrate, but he also offers some insights that could be used to develop a robustly collective account of emotional sharing without necessarily accepting the idea of a collective subject of that emotion, or so I shall argue.

Following this line of reasoning, the paper is organized into two parts: in the first, I illustrate Scheler's forms of togetherness and the parallel that he draws with kinds of groups by focusing on the distinction that he contends exists between the notion of a collective person and that of community. In the second part, I come back to the idea of emotional sharing by sketching an analysis that relies on some of the insights secured by Scheler. Whether or not this analysis reflects Scheler's view is a mainly exegetical and historical question, which I am not in a position to settle in this paper.

2) Max Scheler: forms of togetherness and kinds of groups

Scheler argues for a parallel between different forms of togetherness and different kinds of groups, the suggestion being that such forms of sociality are able to identify different kinds of groups. According to Scheler, there are three forms of togetherness, one of which can be equated with what in contemporary debate is called "collective intentionality".

The first form of sociality is that of emotional contagion (*Gefühl-*

⁸ Cf. D. VON HILDEBRAND (1930), *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, in Dietrich von Hildebrand Gesellschaft (ed.), *Dietrich von Hildebrand Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. IV, Stuttgart, 1975; and A. SALICE, *Communities and Values. Dietrich von Hildebrand's Social Ontology*, in A. SALICE, H.B. SCHMID (edd.), *Social Reality. The Phenomenological Approach*. Dordrecht 2016, 237-258.

⁹ Cf. E. STEIN, *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, in «Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung» 5 (1922), 1-284; G. WALTHER, *Zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften*, in «Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung», 6 (1923), 1-158.

sansteckung).¹⁰ Scheler maintains that emotions can spread like viruses among individuals. To provide an example, if you enter into a discussion with a sad person, it might be that her sadness contaminates you and that you also become sad – and this without your being aware that her emotion has been transferred to you.¹¹ More importantly, there is a sense in which one could say that emotional contagion generally implies illusion, for one believes oneself to be the genuine author of the emotion, whereas, in reality, this mental state has originated in another individual and has passed from mind to mind through contagion (such that only by means of “inferences and causal considerations” can one become aware of the authentic origin of one’s mental state).¹²

Bearing this notion of emotional contagion in mind, let us now return to the example of the mourning parents and ask: is this a case of emotional contagion? Obviously, the question has to be answered in the negative, for it is not the case that one parent has no reason for being sad or is not aware that his or her partner is sad as well; in brief, it is not the case that the emotion of one individual has just *contaminated* the other via some purely causal mechanism: by contrast, in that scenario, both parents are intentionally related to the tragic event of their child’s death.

How about the second form of togetherness? According to Scheler, this is a form of social understanding on which basis sympathy, understood in the sense of *Mitgefühl*, might arise.¹³ One feels sympathy when one rejoices in the joy of someone else or commiserates with his or her sorrow. Sympathy, according to Scheler, is a complex phenomenon, for one first has to be aware of the emotion of the other in order to then sympathize with him or her. Although Scheler is not entirely clear about this, it seems that such grasping can occur in different ways. One of them is by means of acts of “vicarious feelings”, or *Nachfühlen*, which can be associated with what today is called “empathy”.¹⁴ It is not immediately evident what Scheler means by this expression, but he il-

¹⁰ M. SCHELER, *Wesen und Formen...*, GW VII, 25 ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24 ff.

¹⁴ Cf. D. ZAHAVI, *Simulation, projection and empathy*, «Consciousness and Cognition», 17 (2008), 514-522.

illustrates it with cases of so-called presentifications (*Vergegenwärtigungen*). If, for instance, one once saw a landscape and is now making it present to one's consciousness, then one has the landscape *intuitively* in front of oneself – although one is not perceiving it in the proper sense of the term (given that perception is about the self-given object). Similarly, one can vicariously feel what someone else is feeling – this only means, however, that one is making it intuitively present to oneself, not that one is feeling what the other person is feeling.¹⁵

Does the form of togetherness that is at stake in the example of the two parents qualify as a case of sympathy? Again, the answer seems to be negative. One would not adequately describe the situation were one to say that one parent is sad (because of the dead child) and that the other is commiserating with the first parent's sorrow. And the reason is that, again, both are intentionally related to the tragic death, which is what, in a way, elicits the emotional response. Still, both cases appear to have something in common, namely the fact that in both scenarios the subjects involved must have an empathic grasp of the other's emotion. In a brief passage of the *Sympathiebuch*, Scheler indeed suggests that there is *Nachfühlen* between the two parents, but one which is interwoven with the shared emotion and phenomenologically not visible.¹⁶

The first two forms of togetherness are unable to accommodate collective emotions and, indeed, Scheler explicitly describes what is going on between the two individuals by recurring to a third form of togetherness, namely, to co-feeling or *Miteinanderfühlen*. Co-feeling is characterized as feeling a certain emotion together, but this form of togetherness needs not be confined to emotions. Rather, this is a particular case of co-experiencing or *Miteinanderleben* – a notion that captures the idea of sharing mental states with others.¹⁷ In fact, and although their treatment exceeds the purpose of this paper, it should be mentioned that, according to Scheler, not only emotions but also cognitive and conative attitudes can be shared as well, that is, experiences of several kinds (but not all kinds of experiences, as we will soon see) can be co-experienced.¹⁸

¹⁵ For this example, cf. M. SCHELER, *Wesen und Formen...*, GW VII, 20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23f.

¹⁸ M. SCHELER, *Der Formalismus...*, GW II, 529f.

But, now, how is one to cash out co-feeling? Two additional elements have to be introduced before tackling this question. First, not all kinds of emotions are prone to be shared. Scheler distinguishes a plethora of different kinds of emotions¹⁹ but, of them, only mental (*psychisch*) emotions can be shared²⁰ – these are feelings characterized by the fact that they are not localized in the body (to illustrate this distinction, just think of how bodily pain feels different from, say, grief). Secondly, Scheler apparently oscillates between two *prima facie* contradictory views about the metaphysical status of shared emotions. On the one hand, he seems to claim that, when an emotion is shared, there is only *one* single mental fact that is occurring and not merely two different mental states of the same type.²¹ On the other, he emphasizes that, when two individuals share an emotion, their feelings are given to the respective subjects differently,²² hence suggesting at the same time that there are two mental facts involved. Based on where the emphasis has been put (whether on the one or the other text passage), different accounts of shared emotions and different interpretations of Scheler’s view thereof have been developed: following the first remarks, Schmid advocates a “one token view” about shared emotions,²³ whereas Zahavi, in stressing the role of empathy for shared emotions, dismisses that view.²⁴

Is there any way to make sense of Scheler’s apparently contradictory claims? An interesting angle from which this dilemma can be considered is by looking at the kinds of groups that are linked to the forms of sociality just discussed. The reason for adopting this strategy is that Scheler couples co-experiencing with two different kinds of groups, hence establishing a sort of dis-analogy: for, although Scheler intends to establish a parallelism between forms of togetherness and kinds of

¹⁹ K. MULLIGAN, *Die Anatomie des Herzens oder was man alles fühlen kann*, in H. LANDWEER, U. RENZ (edd.), *Klassische Emotionstheorien von Platon bis Wittgenstein*, Berlin 2008, 587-612.

²⁰ M. SCHELER, *Wesen und Formen...*, GW VII, 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 24, 48, 75, 252.

²² *Ibid.*, 48 (I am thankful to Dan Zahavi for drawing my attention to these passages).

²³ Cf. H.B. SCHMID, *Plural Action*, Dordrecht 2009, 59-83.

²⁴ Cf. D. ZAHAVI, *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame*, Oxford 2014, 241 ff.

groups, he identifies *three* kinds of sociality, but introduces *four* kinds of groups. Before highlighting how all this bears on the issue of emotional sharing, let me first characterize the four types of groups and highlight some of their fundamental features.

The most primitive kind of group is the mass²⁵ – I use the term “primitive” here not in its logical sense but, rather, in contrast to cultivated, designed and/or complex. The mass is characterized by emotional contagion and, more generally, by involuntary imitation of the other and by alignment of behavior. Hence, this process of imitation is not restricted to emotions, for it can extend to beliefs and even patterns of behavior. Scheler actually goes so far as to describe the entire process of tradition-following as a form of contagion.²⁶ Remember that, in contagion, one is generally not aware of having been contaminated, so one wrongly believes that a certain mental state originates in oneself, whereas it has actually originated in someone else. This leads to the consequence that, within the mass, the individual ignores having anything in common with the other individuals, i.e., the individual ignores “being together” with the others, according to this specific form of sociality.

The second kind of group covers societies, and the dominant form of sociality here is social understanding and, in case this is elicited, sympathy.²⁷ Remember that the sympathizer is the one who adequately discriminates his or her own mental states from those of the others and who, only after taking a step further, sympathizes with them. Accordingly, a society is composed of individual persons who recognize the other members as individual persons with whom one can enter into social relations and with whom one can even join forces to reach goals that would be impossible for the single individual to reach alone. And, yet, exactly because of that, i.e., exactly because all the persons involved within a society see each other as distinct individuals and only pursue their (personal) interests, no experiences are shared or co-experienced in the genuine sense at this level.

The third kind of group is the community.²⁸ Members of a commu-

²⁵ Cf. M. SCHELER, *Der Formalismus...*, GW II, 529.

²⁶ M. SCHELER, *Wesen und Formen...*, GW VII, 48.

²⁷ Cf. M. SCHELER, *Der Formalismus...*, GW II, 531.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 529 ff.

nity co-experience mental states. Scheler contends that it is impossible to trace back collective mental states to individual mental states supplemented by common knowledge (*viz.* my knowledge that you have these mental states *plus* your knowledge that I have these mental states *plus* my knowledge about your knowledge of my mental states *plus* your knowledge about my knowledge of your mental states *plus* my knowledge about your knowledge about my knowledge etc.).²⁹ Not only are these mental states ontologically irreducible, but they also constitute a stream of experiences whose subject is a *we*³⁰ (“*Wirerlebnis, Wirbewußtsein*”).³¹ The communal *we* is so encompassing that its members primarily live *in* the community and *for* the community; this is an important point for my argument, and one to which I will come back in the next section.

Although communities and societies are distinct kinds of groups, Scheler argues that the latter presupposes the former: every society is founded upon a community. This is not to be taken in the sense that the members of a society are at the same time members of a community so that for every society there is a community encompassing the same members. Scheler’s point is rather that, in order to enter into a society, individuals must have been or must currently be members of *some* community.³²

Before addressing the structure and nature of the fourth kind of group, *i.e.*, of the collective person, it might be useful to briefly recap what has been said so far. I first addressed how Scheler describes three forms of sociality: emotional contagion, social understanding (*viz.* sympathy) and co-experiencing. I also highlighted that these three forms of sociality are central to the mental life of three of the four kinds of groups that Scheler delineates, namely, masses, societies and communities. Now, one might wonder what form of sociality is at the core of collective persons and this, Scheler claims, is *co-experiencing*: a collective person is a *we* the members of which share a cognitive, conative and affective life. But, then, what distinguishes a community from a collective person?

To answer this question, it might be helpful to first address a point

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 530.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 530.

³¹ M. SCHELER, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*, GW VIII, 374.

³² Cf. M. SCHELER, *Der Formalismus...*, GW II, 535.

left underdetermined: this was the idea that the members of a community primarily live *in* the community and *for* the community. To illustrate this point, I will first quote some interesting passages in Scheler's *Sympathiebuch* and then comment on them:

[A] man tends, in the first instance, to live more in *others* than in himself; more in the community than in his own individual self. [...] Imbued as [the child] is with "family feeling", his own life is at first almost completely hidden from him. Rapt, as it were, and hypnotized by the ideas and feelings of this concrete environment of his, the only experiences which succeed in crossing the threshold of his inner awareness are those which fit into the sociologically conditioned patterns which form a kind of channel for the stream of his mental environment. Only very slowly does he raise his mental head, as it were, above this stream flooding over it, and find himself as a being who also, at times, has feelings, ideas and tendencies of his own. And this, moreover, only occurs to the extent that the child objectifies the experiences of his environment in which he lives and partakes, and thereby gains detachment from them. The mental content of experience that is virtually absorbed "with one's mother's milk" is not the result of a transference of ideas, experienced as something "communicated". For communication entails that we understand the "communicated content" as proceeding from our informant, and that while understanding it we also appreciate its origin in the other person. But this factor is just what is absent in that mode of transference which operates between the individual and his environment. A posited judgment, the expression of an emotional movement etc., is not "understood" in a first stance and experienced as the expression of another *I*, but is rather co-experienced without the "co-" in the "co-experiencing" coming to phenomenal givenness; but this means: it is experienced primarily "as" his own judgment and "as" his own emotional movement.³³

Although in this passage Scheler focuses on some aspects of what nowadays would be called "developmental psychology", the complete immersion in the community's life is not something that characterizes the mental life of children alone. Indeed, Scheler continues:

³³ M. SCHELER, *Wesen und Formen...*, GW VII, 241, my trans.

[T]he vengeful impulses of a member of the family or tribal unit in respect of any insult or injury towards a fellow-member [*Gliedes*] of the same unit is not due to “sympathy” [*Mitgefühl*] (which already presupposes the givenness of the suffering as the suffering of the other), but to an experiencing of this insult or injury as immediately “proper” [*eigener*] – a phenomenon which is grounded in the fact that the individual initially lives more in the community than it does in himself.³⁴

I guess one way to interpret these interesting passages is by arguing that the *I* can co-experience collective thoughts, volitions or emotions, framing them as if they were *her private* thoughts, volitions or emotions. In these cases, the subject is *not* aware that she is only *co-experiencing* these mental states (for «the “co-” in the “co-experiencing” does not come to phenomenal givenness») – and, yet, nevertheless, she *is* experiencing a collective mental state.

Scheler’s observations truly stand out if read against the background of the current debate on collective intentionality, and I believe that they indeed reveal something important for an account of emotional sharing. Current debate mainly (if not exclusively) focuses on cases in which the individual mistakenly frames his or her attitudes as the mental states of a group.³⁵ These are, roughly, scenarios in which the individual believes that she is a member of a group and that she is engaging in collective intentionality, whereas in reality this is *not* the case. For instance, imagine that I come to the idea that *we* decided to paint a house together. I start to paint the roof as part of what I take to be our plan, but then I notice that you are not painting at all. In this case, I thought I had a collective intention to paint the house together with you, whereas in reality this attitude was only individual.

Scheler, by contrast, grants the possibility of another kind of scenario – an even more radical one in which genuinely collective attitudes are framed by the individual as her own private attitudes.³⁶ Actually, he seems to argue that the default social situation is *not* the one

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 242, my trans.

³⁵ Cf. J.R. SEARLE, *Collective Intentions and Actions*, in P.R. COHEN, J. MORGAN, M.E. POLLACK (edd.), *Intentions in Communication*, Cambridge 1990, 401-15.

³⁶ Cf. M. SCHELER, *Die Wissensformen...*, GW VIII, 285.

in which there is an isolated *I* who then intends to join others in order to form a *we* (and who might fail in her attempt); rather, it is the one in which the *we* encompasses the *I* in such a pervasive way that, as it were, the *I* is phagocytized by the *we* (this is the effect of a mental process that Scheler calls *Einsfühlung* or, in English, “feeling to be one”).³⁷ The opacity of the *I-we* distinction is typical of communities and, although, as Scheler further argues, in certain cases the individuals *can* gain an understanding of the attitudes’ collectivity within the community, such understanding is realized only *during* and *within* the limits of the co-experiencing itself.³⁸ To put it differently, this is an understanding that is elicited by the practical interaction the individuals engage in, and that dissolves once the interaction comes to its end.

Arguably, then, the main element of distinction between collective persons and communities does not concern the form of togetherness (this being the same in both kinds of groups, namely, co-experiencing); it rather concerns the fact that the former groups are characterized by a kind of understanding that is absent in the latter: collective persons are groups whose members are persons able to adequately discriminate the proper owner of the experiences they are undergoing.³⁹ Members of collective persons are individual persons who are aware of being not only owners of their own mental states, but also co-owners of collective mental states. In other words, the structure of their mental states is transparent to them. It might be helpful here to recur to one crucial insight of Scheler’s theory of personhood: personhood is not a property that is conferred by birth, so to say, but is rather a status that one achieves when one becomes a “mature” adult, or when one acquires *Mündigkeit* (majority or maturity). Maturity is understood here as «the

³⁷ Cf. A. SALICE, *Collective Intentionality and the Collective Person in Max Scheler*, in S. RINOFNER, H. WILTSCHKE (edd.), *Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Methods and Perspectives*. Berlin 2016, 277-288.

³⁸ Cf. M. SCHELER, *Wesen und Formen...*, GW VII, 529.

³⁹ To be sure, the two kinds of groups also diverge with regard to several other aspects (cf. A. SALICE, *Collective Intentionality and the Collective Person...*), but this is probably the most relevant one for the theory of collective intentionality. It should also be stressed that the reason why members of *Gesamtpersonen* develop that specific understanding is because they previously entered into societies, thereby having “developed into persons” in the sense tackled at the end of this paragraph.

possibility to experience [*Erlebenkönnen*] the insight of difference [*Verschiedenheitseinsicht*] between *one's own* and *someone else's acts* [...] Or in plain language this means that a man is not of age as long as he simply *co-executes* [*mitvollzieht*] the experiential intentions [*Erlebnisintentionen*] of his environment *without first understanding them*». ⁴⁰ Accordingly, one way to express Scheler's insight is by claiming that collective persons *are* communities, but communities formed by adult persons – they are communities because their members co-experience mental states.

3) A Schelerian Approach to Emotional Sharing

I want to emphasize the latter point of the last paragraph (i.e., the idea that the form of togetherness is the same for both kinds of groups) as much as possible for, if this is on the right track, then it suggests that one could adopt two different perspectives towards one and the same experience. Said another way, one and the same experience can be had in two different “modes” (this concept is alien to Scheler, but may be helpful in clarifying the point at stake).⁴¹ Within a community, experiences (whether individual or collective) are had predominantly as individual and private experiences; in a sense, they are had in a particular “mode”, which could be called an “I-mode”. Although I am co-feeling an emotion together with someone else, this emotion is given to me as *my* – private and individual – emotion. By contrast, the structure of the collective emotion is transparent for members of collective persons, and this idea could be cashed out by saying that the collective emotion is had by the individual in the adequate mode, or, let's call it, “we-”mode. When the collective emotion is had in the “we-mode”, then the individual is aware that she does not own the experience privately; rather, she co-owns or co-experiences it. So, it seems, it is possible to have a collective experience in two different modes: in the I- and the we-mode. The same can be said for individual mental states – generally, individual experiences are transparent to their owners given that their subjects

⁴⁰ M. SCHELER, *Der Formalismus...*, GW II, 484. Eng. trans. by P. Heath, *The Nature of Sympathy*, London 1954, mod. 479, my emphasis.

⁴¹ On the notion of I-mode and we-mode, cf. R. TUOMELA, *The Philosophy of Sociality: The Shared Point of View*, Oxford, 2007.

tend to have them in an I-mode. But it is also possible to have individual experiences in a we-mode – in this case, which is highlighted by Searle, the subject incorrectly frames individual experiences in we-terms.

Now note – if what has been said so far is sensible, then one could argue that I feel the emotion as *ours*, when I have the emotion in the we-mode, and I feel the emotion as *mine*, if I have that emotion in the I-mode. And this is *regardless* of whether the emotion at stake is collective or singular. And what would it mean to feel the emotion as *ours*? One conclusion to draw from Scheler’s analysis is that it cannot mean that I take the way in which I feel that emotion to cover or to exhaust all facets of the emotion itself (for, if that were the case, I would have it in the I-mode). Rather, I should be aware that the emotion is co-experienced by the others and, hence, that there are further facets of that emotion that are precluded to me (given that I merely co-experience the emotion, but I do not experience it exhaustively). If the others feel that emotion as well, then the emotion *is* collective, and the adequate mode of having it is the we-mode, one could conclude.

Why does all this bear on the issue of emotional sharing and on the dilemma identified above? Getting back to Scheler’s apparent oscillation about this issue – does sharing an emotion boil down to the individuals’ having different emotions, which are perhaps related to each other by some structure of social cognition (as, e.g., Walther and, on at least one interpretation,⁴² Stein would have it)? Or is it rather the case that “sharing” must be understood in the usual sense, meaning that there is only *one* emotion that is owned by several individuals? As we have seen, the second option generates the problem as to who is supposed to be the subject of that single emotion: this is because, if individual mental states are owned and experienced by one (individual) subject, then, so the worry goes, collective mental states should be owned and experienced by one (plural or collective) subject. But assuming the existence of such a subject is metaphysically spooky and phenomenologically incorrect, as we have emphasized above.

But are all these worries truly justified? The problem seems to arise only if one grants that the emotion at stake is a mereologically simple

⁴² Cf. T. SZANTO, *Collective Emotions, Normativity, and Empathy: A Steinian Account*, «Human Studies», 38-4 (2015), 503-527.

entity that is owned by one entity – but couldn't one somehow conceive of the emotion as a complex entity, as a whole that is made of several parts to the effect that, once the owners of the parts are identified, nothing is left and that, thus, there is no need to postulate an additional owner?

In other words, one suggestion could be to describe the collective emotion as being *one* and having *parts* at the same time. If such a description turns out to be sufficiently plausible, then one would be able to contend both claims at the same time: that the collective emotion is one (in the sense that it is a whole), although it preserves multiplicity (because it is constituted by several parts). And, *if* it preserves multiplicity (it is a whole suitably construed out of its parts), then there is no reason to postulate *one* subject of that emotion – one group in which several individual subjects are fused. Still, how would the notion of a whole have to be construed so as to accommodate all these claims? There is, it seems, one *desideratum* that such a notion would have to fulfill – the description of the collective experience as a whole would have to preserve the fact that the whole has to be of the same species as its parts. Said another way, the collective attitude has to be an emotion just like my emotion and your emotion (as parts of that attitude); and yet this attitude is had by you and me, together.

This, one could object, is not obvious at all for, generally, if one assembles a whole from distinct parts, then the whole is not of the same species as its parts (it can be of the same genus, though). If one assembles a chair, its parts are not chairs; a lion is not made of lions, etc. Still, it is not the case that all wholes are constituted in this way. According to Aristotle, there are different senses of “separability” (i.e., different senses of the term “whole”) – and, among them, one which may play a role for our purposes is a kind of separability that does not necessarily entail ontological (or actual) separability.⁴³ Aristotle argues that items are separate in account (*logos*) when they have radically different descriptions. Consider the following example: one arc can be described as convex or as concave, depending on the perspective of the observer. The idea is that, even if the arc is one entity, one thing, it is made by two radically different and yet dependent parts that can be

⁴³ Cf. ARISTOTLE, *ENI* 13 1102a 26-32; *Phys.* IV 13 222b 3.

detached only conceptually, not actually – a concave arc and a convex arc (these parts are what, within phenomenologically oriented metaphysics, Brentano qualifies as merely distinctional parts).⁴⁴ The point is that there cannot be any concave arc without a convex arc – both parts constitute one single entity (*one* arc), and both parts are of the same species as the whole.

The attempt now could be made to merge these mereological considerations with Scheler's idea of the different modes that one can take towards a collective emotion and focus on the case where the mode is the "appropriate" one – what would make it appropriate? Well, it seems that at least *one* necessary condition is that all individuals feel the collective emotion and that all of them feel it in a *we*-mode. If I feel that emotion in the *I*-mode, then I am adopting the wrong mode, as it were. But what would it mean to feel the *collective* emotion? There is no phenomenological dimension that one can attach to that expression – for what is supposed to capture the phenomenological quality of the experience is the mode that the individuals adopt when feeling the emotion (after all, I can feel a collective emotion as *my* private emotion, if I take the "wrong" mode towards it).

If that is on the right track, then the following suggestion might sound plausible: to share an emotion means that what I feel is linked to what you feel in the same way that the concave arc is linked to the convex arc. Both feelings are two distinct sides of the same coin, as it were, and one could not exist without the other – meaning that the mental state (the emotion) is one, but the way in which it is given to me (or: the way in which I feel it) is radically different from the way in which it is given to you (or: from how you feel it). Said another way, the description I give of the collective emotion is different from your description of it, because our feelings are different – and, yet, there is unity in multiplicity. In the case in which I have that emotion in the *we*-mode, i.e., in the case in which I feel that emotion as our emotion, I am aware that I am co-experiencing the emotion with you, meaning that I am aware that how I feel the emotion is correlative to the way in which you feel that emotion.

⁴⁴ Cf. F. BRENTANO, *Descriptive Psychology*, London 2012; A. SALICE, *Franz Brentano*, in H. BURKHARDT, G. IMAGUIRE, J. SEIBT (edd.) *Handbook of Mereology*, Munich (forthcoming).

But, still, since I am just co-experiencing the emotion and, hence, since I merely co-own the emotion, I am also aware that the way in which you feel that emotion is precluded to me and that I do not have access to how the emotion is given to you (to what you feel) *from within*.

And, yet, metaphysically, the collective emotion is just the mereological unity of the two distinct feelings (no additional ingredient is needed). To be sure, this view implies a strong version of externalism about mental contents according to which my mental state is partly identified by your mental state and vice versa. Note that the subject needs not be aware of that – and indeed this is what seems to occur when the individuals, within communities, frame collective mental states in I-terms, i.e., when they do not realize that some of their mental experiences are individuated by those of other members. This metaphysical level of analysis also has to be preserved to make sense of Searle’s cases in which singular experiences are had in the we-mode – phenomenologically, this scenario seems to be indistinguishable from collective experiences in the we-mode and, yet, as we have stated repeatedly, there is a sense in which it is only in the latter case that the we-mode is the only “adequate” mode. The mode’s adequacy or inadequacy is hence anchored in the metaphysics of the collective emotion.

If this widely systematic reconstruction is on the right track, then Scheler’s oscillation between two contradictory claims turns out not to be an oscillation at all. According to this interpretation, there is a sense in which, when several subjects share an emotion, it is *one* emotion that they share, although the ways in which the subjects feel that emotion are radically different. However, speaking of “radically different ways of givenness or of feelings” should not be taken as something over and above the givenness of the emotion to the two subjects, for the way each subject feels is all that there is – such different feelings, it seems, *are all the constituents* of the collective emotion that one can possibly find. Interestingly, one could also say that *the* collective emotion as such, the entire state comprehensive of all features, is not given to *anybody* – the illusion of having the entire attitude given to oneself arises only if one mistakenly frames the emotion in I-terms or takes an I-mode towards it.

Concluding, I would not deny that more work would have to be done to anchor this systematic interpretation in Scheler’s texts. The hope is that, even if this reconstruction turns out to be incompatible

with Scheler's thought, it could still remain a viable option to cash out what we mean when we say that we feel something *together* or that we *share* an emotion.⁴⁵

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ABSTRACT

What does it mean to share or to co-experience an emotion? What makes statements of the form “we feel emotion *x* together” true? This paper develops a systematic interpretation of Max Scheler’s theory of co-experiencing (*Miteinandererleben*), which aims at squaring two contrasting intuitions. According to the first intuition, when sev-

eral individuals share an emotion, it is one emotion – *one* experience – that is shared. The second intuition suggests that co-experiencing an emotion preserves self-other differentiation – that is, it preserves a plurality of individual perspectives and, hence, of mental states.

By elaborating on Scheler's theory, it can be shown that the first intuition concerns the metaphysical structure of the shared emotion, whereas the second intuition is about the way in which the emotion is lived through by the individuals. While, metaphysically, sharing an emotion implies this experience being numerically one, at the phenomenological level the emotion is lived through by the individuals from different perspectives. If this is on the right track, then the Schelerian conceptual framework of co-experiencing proves able to accommodate both intuitions.