8

An Empathic Eye

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What you see can shape how you feel, and the route from seeing to feeling sometimes involves empathy—as you might empathize with a woman you see grieving the death of her child. But empathy also comes from what you see in pictures: many paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs evoke empathy and are designed to do so. Going further, it seems that episodes of empathy triggered by pictures can help build up a person's capacity for empathic response. Indeed, they do so by fortifying the link between seeing and empathy in a distinctive way. To establish this thesis, we will need a broad conception of empathic response (broader than the one used elsewhere in this volume) and also the right conception of what we see in pictures.

8.1 Empathy and Seeing in Pictures

The thesis that pictures contribute in a distinctive way to empathic skill is far from trivial. On the contrary, the more obvious it is that pictures contribute at all to empathic skill, the harder it is to see how they might do so in a distinctively pictorial manner.

Some journalistic photographs are paradigms of pictures that engage empathy. An example is Eddie Adams's famous 1968 photograph of General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a manacled Viet Cong prisoner. It is no mystery how the photograph achieves this effect. It depicts the scene so as to enable us to experience it much as if we were there, on the spot, seeing it with our own eyes, without help from a photograph. Were we there to see the execution face-to-face, presumably we would empathize with the prisoner, all else being equal; and that is why the photograph evokes an empathic response. True, the experience of seeing a scene in the photograph is not just like an experience of seeing the scene face-to-face. The two experiences obviously differ in many respects. Nevertheless, these respects are not ones in virtue of which the photograph evokes empathy. It evokes empathy by delivering an experience that matches a face-to-face experience of the scene itself.

The same goes for non-photographic images. Goya's painting *The Third of May* also depicts an execution and evokes a strong empathic response. True, the experience of

the execution in the Goya differs more from a face-to-face experience of the execution than does an experience of the execution in the Adams. The Adams seems more lifelike than the Goya. Even so, the Goya evokes an experience that is like a face-to-face experience of an execution, and the respects in which these experiences are similar are the respects in virtue of which the painting evokes an empathic response.

A little terminology drives the point home. Pictures evoke experiences as of the scenes they represent. Call these experiences 'seeing-in'. To see a man in a photograph is to have an experience, sustained by the photograph, as of a man (this is not exactly the same as what Wollheim (1987) calls 'seeing-in'). All figurative pictures sustain seeing-in in this sense. The claim is that the features of seeing-in that are responsible for evoking empathy are features with respect to which seeing-in resembles face-to-face seeing. Empathic response picks up on the very same features, whether they figure in seeing-in or face-to-face seeing.

If this is right, then it is straightforward to explain why pictures contribute to empathic skill. Exercising a skill generally improves the skill. Pictures contribute to empathic skill because evoking episodes of empathy contributes to empathic skill and they evoke episodes of empathy that are relevantly similar to extra-pictorial episodes of empathy. By way of analogy, indoor climbing walls contribute to climbing ability because climbing mountains contributes to climbing ability and indoor climbing walls afford climbs that are relevantly similar to climbs up mountains.

However, this explanation of how pictures contribute to empathic skill subverts the thesis that pictures contribute distinctively to empathic skill. The reason why pictures contribute to empathic skill at all is that they sustain empathy-affording experiences that are similar to extra-pictorial empathy-affording experiences. Pictures make the same kind of contribution to empathic skill as do episodes of empathy evoked by face-to-face seeing. So if pictures contribute to empathic skill at all, then their contribution is not distinctive.

An obvious reply denies the claim that pictures evoke empathic responses only by approximating experiences in which we empathize with people we see face-to-face. Some of the features of seeing-in that are responsible for evoking empathy are features with respect to which it fails to resemble face-to-face seeing. The problem is first to pinpoint certain features of seeing-in with respect to which seeing-in does not resemble face-to-face seeing, where the features in question are responsible for evoking episodes of empathy. Call this the 'difference problem'. Solving this problem is only the first step, however. The second step is to show that these distinctively pictorial episodes of empathy contribute to an empathic skill that is also exercised outside pictures. It would not do only to show that pictures build up abilities to empathize with people seen in pictures. What matters is that pictures contribute to a skill that carries over to life beyond pictures. Call this the 'carryover problem'. Only having addressed these two problems are we in a position to proclaim the thesis that pictures contribute in a distinctive manner to empathic ability.

Taken individually, the difference and carryover problems pose no big challenge. The trick is to solve both problems together.

Perhaps one difference between seeing a man in a picture and seeing a man face-to-face is that the former does not imply seeing a man (contra Walton (1984) and Lopes (1996): 174–93.). When you look at the Adams or the Goya, you do not see a man being shot. You see only a picture, and the picture shows the look of the scene without showing the scene itself. This is why, no matter how close seeing-in and seeing face-to-face come to each other phenomenologically, the fact remains that seeing-in is not face-to-face seeing.

From one angle, this solution to the difference problem is just what we need. After all, you might reject the above explanation of why we respond empathically to the Adams photograph. According to that explanation, we respond empathically because the photograph delivers an experience like the experience of seeing the execution face-to-face and we would empathize with the prisoner were we there to see the execution face-to-face (all else being equal). You might object that most people seeing the execution face-to-face would not respond with empathy. Empathic response would be blocked by the reality of the situation, which would trigger shock, fear, or some other response incompatible with empathy. The photograph evokes empathy only by bracketing the 'reality of the situation'.

From another angle, though, this solution to the difference problem exacerbates the carryover problem. After all, this difference between seeing-in and seeing face-to-face presumably makes a difference to empathic response. It makes a difference to visually-mediated empathic response whether or not the empathizer sees the object of his or her response. But why should any response absent the empathizee carry over to cases where the empathizee is present? It is hard to answer without putting pressure on the solution to the difference problem. Thus one answer is that when we see the Adams, we imagine seeing a man being executed, where imagining seeing the man is enough like seeing a man to solve the carryover problem. Now the problem is obvious: seeing and imagining seeing both trigger empathy because they are similar in relevant respects, so the absence of the empathizee in imagining seeing is a difference that does not make a difference to empathic response.

Here is another example of how tricky it is to solve both problems at once. Not everybody agrees that the experience of seeing a scene in a picture resembles in salient respects seeing the scene face-to-face. According to Robert Hopkins (1998), pictures elicit experiences of resemblances between features of scenes and features of the pictures themselves. Normally, looking at a picture of a man involves an experience of a resemblance between a picture and a man. But looking at a man in the flesh is normally nothing like this: it is not normally an experience of his resemblance to a picture.

If Hopkins is right, the difference problem does not even get off the ground, but the carryover problem is quite pressing. Experiences of picture-object resemblances might build an ability to detect such resemblances, and they might also strengthen any skill

that implicates this resemblance-detecting ability, but why should the resemblance-detecting ability strengthen empathic skill? Why should the ability to see resemblances between pictures and people boost any capacity to respond empathetically to the sight of people? Again, it would be hasty to conclude that Hopkins is wrong about our experience of pictures. The lesson is simply that quick work with the difference problem often sharpens the carryover problem.

These examples bring out what we need in a solution to the difference problem: it must specify a difference that explains how pictures contribute distinctively to an empathic skill that carries over to extra-pictorial situations.

8.2 The Empathy Complex

Solving the difference and carryover problems requires a working account of empathy. A definition would suffice, even if it falls short of telling us everything we want to know about empathy, its biological origins, its neural implementation, its development in childhood, and its contributions to moral capacity and human thriving. Unfortunately, agreeing on a definition is hard enough. Experts characterize what they call 'empathy' in several incompatible ways, and perhaps the definitions glom onto distinct phenomena, none of which has sole claim to the title of 'empathy'. The situation calls for a little circumspection—for keeping in mind a variety of empathic or empathy-related phenomena (Eisenberg & Strayer (1987): 3–8; Goldie (1999); Preston & de Waal (2002)).

One reason for the variety of empathic phenomena is that nobody feels empathy. Although it always involves an emotion (let emotions include moods and feelings), empathy is not an emotion which belongs on a list with anger, pity, joy, optimism, and the like. Quite possibly every emotion can be involved in empathic response (although it is most often associated with negative emotions). Thus an account of empathy should try to bring out how emotions are involved in different empathic phenomena. The ambiguity of 'involving' perfectly suits the variety of empathic phenomena, each of which involves emotions in a different way.

If empathic phenomena bear nothing to each other but loose family resemblances, then the best account of empathy might be a description of each member of the family. However, we can do better than a gallery of descriptions, for the empirical and philosophical literature hints at some structure underlying the varieties of empathic response, which seem to spring from variance with respect to a small number of decently defined parameters. Seeing empathic phenomena as variants within these parameters represents them as related but distinct.

First some terminology. Vijay feels miserable because he has failed an important exam, and Abby responds empathically. Call Abby the 'subject' of the empathic response and Vijay its 'object'. Note that the object of Abby's empathic response will normally differ from the intentional object of the emotion involved in her response. The object of Abby's empathic response is Vijay, but Abby's empathy

involves in some way the feeling of misery, and the object of that emotion is not Vijay but rather the failed exam. Unless otherwise qualified, let 'subject' and 'object' refer to the subject and object of the empathic response, not an associated emotion.

The emotion parameter represents how some emotion of the object is involved in the subject's empathic response. This parameter has several settings. Abby might feel just what Vijay feels. Sometimes she feels an emotion that is not identical to what he feels but is appropriately related to it. In one case, she shares Vijay's misery and in the other, she responds with an emotion other than misery—pity, perhaps. A third option is less direct: Abby brings to consciousness an experience of misery—an experience that conveys what it is like to be miserable (Green (2008)). This falls short of actually feeling miserable. Finally, Abby might just attribute misery to Vijay without feeling misery or bringing to mind its phenomenology.

The positioning parameter concerns the attitude the subject bears either to the object's situation or to the object's assessment of her situation. Suppose that Vijay believes that, having failed the exam, he has no career prospects, and so he wishes to start over. Abby might also believe that Vijay has no career prospects. Alternatively, she might go no further than attributing to Vijay this belief, without having the same belief. Finally, Abby may respond empathically to Vijay without taking any account of his situation or his assessment of his situation. She may know he is miserable and might even share his misery without knowing what he is miserable about.

The concern parameter has to do with how the subject's desires or well-being line up with with those of the object. Abby can desire that, for her sake, Vijay get what he wants (a shot at a new career); or she can desire the same thing for his sake. The latter is sometimes taken to be a necessary condition for sympathetic response (e.g. Darwall (1998)). For better or worse, sympathy is not mandatory. Abby can desire merely for her own sake that Vijay get what he wants or what is good for him. She also has the option to stand utterly indifferent to his desires and well-being. Empathic response is consistent with indifference.

Some propose that one or more of these three parameters has a setting for imaginings (e.g. Goldman (1995a)). Abby imagines that Vijay's career is in ruins and imagines desiring a new start for him. She imagines that he feels miserable. She imagines desiring, for his sake, that he gets what he wants. These imaginings are acentral: they are about Vijay but they are not from his point of view. Central imaginings can also position the subject. Abby can imagine being in Vijay's situation: she can imagine feeling miserable, anticipating a failed career, wanting a fresh start.

The beauty of this framework is that different empathic responses are modeled by setting the parameters differently. However, not all empathic responses are modeled this way, for different empathic responses can share the same parameter settings. The reason is that we get different empathic responses when there are different causal and rational relationships among the very same parameter settings.

To illustrate, here is a partial inventory of empathic responses (see Goldie (1999) for more). In emotional contagion, the object's emotion causes a like emotion in the

subject. The subject feels what the object feels independently of how the concern and positioning parameters are set. In what James Harold calls 'identification', the subject feels just what the object feels as a result of sharing the object's beliefs and desires about his situation (Harold (2000): 344). Some authors define empathy proper as occurring just in case the subject feels what the object feels as a result of imagining what he believes and wants (Darwall (1998): 267–70; Gaut (1999): 206; Coplan (2004): 144). A weaker definition requires the subject to bring to awareness an experience of what it is like to feel what the object feels (Green (2008)). Susan Feagin defines empathy as the subject's wanting for the object what the object wants for himself, where the subject's wanting this results from her beliefs about what the object believes and wants (Feagin (1988)). In a variant of this, Harold defines empathy as the subject's wanting for the object what the object wants for himself, where the subject's wanting this results from her imagining what the object believes and wants (Harold (2000): 345). Completing this quick inventory takes us to what some call 'understanding' (e.g. Goldie (1999): 399–401; Harold (2000): 345) and others call 'empathy' (e.g. Goldman (1995a)). In these cases, the subject identifies but does not feel what the object feels, which identification is rationally grounded in beliefs about what the object believes and wants.

Some empathic phenomena are composites of more elementary empathic responses. A case in point is Stephen Darwall's 'proto-sympathetic empathy' ((1998): 271–2). For Darwall, this type of empathy involves as a kind of 'double vision'. On one hand, the subject centrally imagines being in the object's position and thereby imagines feeling as the object does. By imagining being in Vijay's situation, Abby imagines feeling his misery. The intentional object of her imagined feeling of misery is the failed exam. On the other hand, Abby also feels a pity which arises from imagining feeling as Vijay feels. This emotion has Vijay and what he feels as its intentional object. Darwall takes sympathy to require a particular form of concern, and a natural foundation for this concern is the double vision found in proto-sympathetic empathy. Abby is led to desire Vijay's well-being by imagining being in his situation and at the same time having a feeling of pity that represents him as feeling miserable in that situation.

In sum, different empathic phenomena emerge from different settings of the emotion, positioning, and concern parameters, together with different causal or rational relationships between these settings. This proposal can be put to several uses. One might argue that some empathic phenomena are central or paradigmatic. One might sort 'genuine' empathic phenomena from 'merely related' phenomena. Perhaps these are worthy tasks, but all we need for present purposes is to see what kinds of factors play into empathy, where empathy is understood broadly.

8.3 Empathic Skill

The claim that pictures contribute distinctively to empathic skill calls for more than an account of empathy; it also calls for an account of empathic skill. Define empathic skill

as consisting in having whatever cognitive wherewithal is implicated in empathic response. Not everybody has the same degree of empathic skill; improvements can come with exercise.

Is the skill a virtue? Heather Battaly argues in this volume that there is more to a virtue of empathy than empathic skill. Any virtue has a motivational component, such that one cannot have a given virtue and regularly act in a way that flouts the end of the virtue. If curiosity is a virtue whose end is getting the truth, then there is more to curiosity than being able to look things up in books, ask questions, doubt dogmas, conduct experiments, observe the details of life, and engage in the other activities which lead to getting the truth. Having the virtue implies engaging in such activities as these without disregard for getting the truth. For example, someone who successfully engages in these truth-conducive activities 'just for fun' does not have the virtue. On this view, not everybody with empathic skill is a virtuous empathizer: some have the skill and yet lack the virtue because they lack the right motivation. If Battaly is right, the claim that pictures hone empathic skill is not identical to the claim that they contribute to a virtue of empathy. However, the former entails the latter because the skill is part of the virtue, so we can skip over the question of what effects pictures have on the motivations of their viewers.

The parameters for variance among empathic responses point to some of the components of empathic skill. The emotion and positioning parameters are key. A person cannot have much empathic skill unless she can have or represent emotions—in particular, the emotions of the object of her empathic response. She must also be able to have beliefs or imaginings about the object's situation or the object's own perspective on his situation. That is just a start, for another component of empathic response is the linkage between settings of the emotion and positioning parameters. For example, one kind of empathy consists in feeling what the object feels as a consequence of centrally imagining being in his situation. A person capable of such a response must have capacities for central imagining and feeling, and she must be wired up so that the one feeds into the other.

Not everyone can boast full empathic competence if this means being equipped for every type of empathic response. Some people are ready for some kinds of responses and not others (Kennett (2002)). Moreover, one should expect to find people with deficits covering different sets of empathic responses. An interesting empirical issue concerns deficit patterns: probably capacities for some species of empathic response imply capacities for others. Empathic skill is made up of components.

The component model of empathic skill has an important developmental consequence. Grant that empathic skill develops, like other skills, through exercise. This assumption does not by itself imply that one can only improve the ability for a given type of empathic response by exercising that very response. Take the case of Abby's sharing Vijay's emotion as a result of centrally imagining being in his situation. Underlying Abby's response are two abilities, to share emotions and to centrally

imagine being in another person's situation. Each ability may be gained independently, and one might hone each ability by having many other kinds of empathic responses.

The point is crucial to appreciating how pictures contribute to empathic skill, for one conception of what the contribution requires sets the bar too low and another sets it too high. Empathic skill depends on many quite general cognitive systems such as affect, perception, belief, and general-purpose reasoning. Looking at pictures almost certainly contributes to the development and refinement of many of these. Thus it is almost trivial that pictures contribute to empathic skill. The bar is set too low. Setting the bar too high is the claim that pictures contribute to the development of a given type of empathic response only by evoking responses of that very type. Very few pictures invite their spectators to feel just what a depicted figure feels through centrally imagining being in the depicted figure's situation. Not even the Adams and the Goya require this. The same goes for other empathic responses—many types of empathic response are engaged by very few if any pictures.

The component model of empathic response sets the bar just right. Although empathy comes in several varieties, and pictures may not engage them all, the component model says that pictures exercise components of one type of empathic response by evoking a different type of empathic response if it shares some of the same components. So if pictures do not evoke the full range of empathic responses, then perhaps they engage empathic responses that share components in common with responses that they do not engage. The component model allows for pictures that help refine one type of empathic response by engaging another, different type of empathic response.

8.4 The Expressive Power of Pictures

Pictures contribute distinctively to empathic skill only if they engage empathic responses. The above characterization of the empathy complex and the components of different empathic responses provides a framework to use in seeing how they engage empathic responses. Pictures fill the positioning parameter by representing people and their circumstances. They fill the emotion parameter by expressing emotions. In expressing emotions, they sometimes parallel ordinary perceptual experience, but they also have special expressive powers, which are the key to solving the difference problem.

Begin with the positioning parameter. A face-to-face experience of a scene normally feeds the content of an attitude towards the scene. Seeing someone smoking a cigarette beside a barrel of gasoline, you come to believe that it is dangerous to stand nearby. In just the same way, what you see in a picture normally feeds an attitude towards the depicted scene. A photograph shows a firefighter facing a wall of fire. In depicting the fire, it depicts something dangerous to the represented figure. You may reasonably take the depicted figure to believe that she is in danger, you might centrally imagine facing

the wall of flames, and in the right circumstances you might even believe that you are in danger too.

Empathic response also involves an emotion in one of a range of ways represented by different settings of the emotion parameter. Since danger triggers and warrants fear, your response to the photograph is likely to involve the firefighter's fear. You might, for example, attribute fear to her, centrally imagine her fear, bring to mind an awareness of what it is like to feel fear, or even share her fear. Perhaps the depicted scene brings in fear all by itself: the fireball's presence is normally sufficient reason to attribute to the firefighter a belief that she is in danger and hence to attribute to her a feeling of fear. There are further options of course. Centrally imagining facing the fire may lead to centrally imagining feeling her fear, and you feel fear if you take yourself to be facing the fire too. That said, emotions are far more often involved in empathic response through the depicted figure—in particular through the figure's expressing what he or she feels.

Pictures represent people expressing what they feel. In narrative painting, expression is typically harnessed to convey the story. Since emotions motivate action, depicting what agents feel is a way of depicting what they are motivated to do, and hence clarifies what they are depicted as doing. The expression of anger on a figure's face distinguishes her landing a blow from her shielding herself. In portraiture, expression is typically used to convey more subtle complexes of emotions that indicate the character of the sitter. Think of what the look of weariness inflected with bemusement tells us about the old man in Rembrandt's self-portrait of 1669. In expressionism, pictures typically depict what amount to pure expressive types. For example, Käthe Kollwitz's many drawings and prints of widows almost systematically explore grief and expressions of grief.

Empathy can switch objects, and pictures of multiple figures can invite or allow empathic responses to one figure after another. The prisoner about to be executed in Adams's photograph is the strongest attractor of empathic response, but it is also possible to empathize with the wincing soldier who is observing the scene (and even with the executioner). The situation observed by the wincing soldier is the situation we observe; and the photograph clues us into his feeling about that situation by showing the expression on his face. While the executioner's face is mostly hidden from sight, his situation is clear. We might attribute to him feelings of indifference. We might imagine feeling his indifference in that situation and come to pity him, if we can bring ourselves to feel concern for his good.

By representing situations and bringing in emotions in these ways, pictures contribute to empathic skill. Exercising a skill generally improves the skill. Pictures evoke episodes of empathy that are relevantly similar to extra-pictorial episodes of empathy; they exercise the same skill as gets exercised in extra-pictorial episodes of empathy. So they contribute to empathic skill. As this reasoning makes clear, though, the contribution is not distinctively pictorial. Carryover is ensured, but the difference problem is pressing.

The point is not to put down pictures' non-distinctive contributions to empathic skill. These contributions are no doubt valuable and important. As the characterization of the empathy complex makes clear, empathic response depends on the good working of sundry recognition and classification abilities. Looking at pictures that represent scenes might fine-tune the ability to recognize the relevant scenes, and looking at pictures that represent expressive figures might fine-tune the ability to recognize facial expressions. For all that, the question remains how pictures contribute in a distinctive manner to empathic response.

In a recent paper, Mitchell Green (2008) has offered a novel account of pictorial expressiveness, which ties to empathy, and which suggests how pictures contribute distinctively to empathic skill. Green begins with a relatively restrictive definition of empathy. Empathic response consists in being aware of what it is like to feel what the object feels. This falls short of actually feeling what the object feels, though it goes beyond merely attributing a feeling to the object, for it requires having an experience with an affective phenomenology. In normal circumstances, the required awareness draws from memory. Abby's memory of what it is like to feel miserable figures in her response to Vijay. Green's idea is that pictures can also supply the needed awareness.

The key for Green is the assumption that pictures of expressive figures can do more than show how emotions look: they can show how emotions feel. In general, expressions of an emotion either show how the emotion looks or how it feels. A painting shows how sadness looks when it depicts the face of a person who looks sad. That is straightforward. What about showing how an emotion feels? Green's example is the closing sequence of *Bonnie and Clyde*:

> The two protagonists are finally caught in a trap and the Feds open fire on them with an absurd amount of artillery. The entire scene occurs in slow motion, giving us a sense of time stopping while we take in the carnage. In doing so, that scene not only shows us what the demise of Bonnie and Clyde might have looked like; it also shows us what a sense of crisis feels like. (Green (2008): 109)

The use of slow motion in the movie makes you aware of what a sense of crisis feels like, and thus puts you in a position to empathize with the outlaws. It positions you to be aware of what it is like to feel what they feel.

As we shall see, this account contains a useful insight; but it has two drawbacks. The first is a limitation of Green's account of the mechanism by which pictures show how emotions feel. People consistently associate experiences in a sense modality with experiences in other sense modalities. For example, piccolos are judged to be bright and the oboe is judged to be dim; vanilla is said to smell smooth and musk to smell rough. The congruence even obtains for the sounds of words: yellow is ping and orange is pong; triangles are ping and ovals are pong. Green adds that yellow is happy and brown is sad, and this is why yellow shows how happiness feels and brown shows how sadness feels. More generally, this is how visible properties show how emotions feel. However, congruence effects are limited in scope. People agree that yellow is

happy and brown is sad, but they do not agree on the color of embarrassment or optimism, so no colors show how embarrassment or optimism feel. If pictures engage empathic responses by showing how emotions feel and if showing how emotions feel relies on congruence effects, then pictures can engage only a limited range of empathic responses.

The second problem connects to the difference and carryover problems. Pictures contribute to empathic skill by sustaining experiences of seeing-in that evoke empathic responses in their viewers. They contribute distinctively to empathic skill only when some of the response-evoking features of seeing-in are not features of face-to-face seeing. The difference problem is to identify these features of seeing-in, and Green's account adroitly solves this problem. Many features of your seeing a sad person face-to-face factor into your empathic response—perhaps you take note of his situation (the broken toy) or his facial expression (tears). But it would be unusual, to say the least, were these factors to include the world's looking brown. Nevertheless, your seeing in a picture a scene with a brown cast shows you how sadness feels and thereby grounds your empathic response. Characterizing pictures as triggering empathic responses by exploiting congruence effects to show how emotions feel solves the difference problem.

The trick is also to solve the carryover problem. The question is whether empathic responses to pictures that show how emotions feel boost empathic skill in a way that carries over to extra-pictorial empathic skill. Responding empathically because you see a brown scene in a picture may well contribute to your ability to respond empathically to scenes in pictures. Not only do you get better at responding empathically to the sadness of other brown pictures, but perhaps you also get better at responding empathically to the happiness of yellow pictures. However, it is less plausible that these benefits carry over as improvements in abilities to respond to emotions that are not color-keyed.

The source of the difficulty is a relatively narrow conception of empathy as being aware of what it is like to feel what the object feels. Starting with this conception means that pictures trigger empathy only if experiences of seeing-in are vehicles for this awareness. Positing that pictures deliver phenomenologically distinctive experiences solves the difference problem but risks any traction we might have on the carryover problem.

Yet Green's account contains a useful insight. One might think that pictures engage empathic responses by expressing emotions only when they depict figures as expressing the emotions. Green demonstrates that this is not the case. Yellow shows how happiness feels, though happy people do not look yellow, and *Bonnie and Clyde* does not express a sense of crisis by depicting the expressive gestures of the outlaws themselves—people never express a sense of crisis by moving very slowly. So some pictures do not express emotions by depicting figures expressing the emotions. Perhaps pictures can engage empathic response by expressing an emotion that is not expressed by any depicted figures.

At this stage, a survey of the expressive powers of pictures should come in handy (Lopes (2005): 50–7). The survey goes beyond

figure expression: an expression that is wholly attributable to some depicted person.

For example, in Goya's *Third of May*, the terror expressed by the white-shirted captive is wholly attributable to that depicted figure, and the hint of bemusement in Rembrandt's 1669 self-portrait is wholly attributable to the sitter. But there is more to expression in pictures than figure expression. Some expressive pictures depict no figures. Landscapes of a certain period often express a sad nostalgia; Saenredam's empty church interiors express a religious purity of heart; mountain scenes often express awe. These are instances of

scene expression: an expression that is attributable to a depicted scene and that is not wholly attributable to any depicted persons.

This definition leaves it open that some of what a picture expresses is attributable both to the scene and to the figures depicted. The dancers in Matisse's *Danse* express joy through their dancing, and so too does the scene in which they dance. With that in mind, return to the closing sequence of *Bonnie and Clyde*. The slow motion is expressive, but although the outlaws feel a sense of crisis, they do not express what they feel by slowing the apparent passage of time.

Empathic responses triggered by pictures involve getting at what the object feels via what the picture depicts (e.g. danger) or expresses (e.g. a look of fear). What a figure expresses indicates what the figure feels—attributing fear to Goya's captive makes sense of his expression of fear. In addition, what the depicted scene expresses can also indicate what the figure feels. Here are two kinds of cases.

Some depicted scenes express emotions that are attributable to depicted figures. The claim is not that the scene expresses the emotion of the figure. It is not as if the picture depicts the figure's emotion as reaching out to modify the figure's world in the same way as it modifies the figure's face and body. Rather, the scene expresses an emotion that lines up with what the figure feels. The scene in *Danse* expresses joy, and joy is attributable to the dancers, but the scene is not an expression of the dancers' joy. In *Bonnie and Clyde*, the scene expresses a sense of crisis and this feeling is attributable to the outlaws even though they do not express their feeling by slowing down the pace of time. Call this

reflective scene expression: an expression E of a token emotion F, where E is attributable to a depicted scene and not wholly attributable to any depicted person S, where token emotion F* is attributable to S, and where F and F* are tokens of the same emotion type.

In reflective scene expression, the scene's expressing an emotion is a reason to attribute the same emotion to a depicted figure. The depicted figure's feeling that emotion makes sense of the scene's expressing what it does.

Not all scene expression is reflective, however. Consider Théodore Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*. The Medusa, a French vessel, had broken up in the seas off the west coast of Africa. Its survivors, clinging to debris, beset by sharks, cannibalized each other to keep alive. The living figures in Géricault's painting express despair and desperation. The sea is relentless and dangerous, but it expresses a malignant indifference as well; and the tiny ship almost out of sight on the horizon expresses blind indifference. Attributing despair to the shipwrecks makes sense both of what they express and also of what the sea and the distance ship express. Their expressing indifference is reason to think that the shipwrecks feel despair. That this is so does not depend, however, on the scene's reflecting what the figures express. Call this phenomenon

reactive scene expression: an expression E that is attributable to a depicted scene and not wholly attributable to any depicted persons S, but where emotion F is attributable to S because S's feeling F is warranted as a response to E.

The model for reactive scene expression is reactive emotions in ordinary interpersonal communication. Attila's glowering at Benedict is a reason to attribute fear to Benedict because feeling fear is warranted as a response to glowering looks. In reactive scene expression, figures are represented as reacting emotionally to what scenes express.

Empathizing always involves getting at what another person feels, so as to share the emotion (or imagine sharing it), react to it (or imagine reacting to it), bring it to mind what it feels like, or merely attribute it. Pictures guide their viewers in several ways to the emotion that is involved in empathic response. They depict the scene as one to which the emotion is the expected response and they depict figures as expressing the emotion. Getting at the emotion in these ways is much like what we do when we respond empathically to real people. However, pictures also guide us to the emotion by reflective and reactive scene expression. This has no parallel in non-pictorial experience, which does not represent bits of inanimate nature as expressing emotions. Herein lies the special expressive power of pictures.

Is the idea of scene expression coherent? One might object that an expression is an expression of an emotion, and an emotion is a mental state of a sentient creature, but since seas and ships are not sentient creatures, they have no emotions, and thus can express nothing. Of course, seas and ships can be represented as sentient—as are the dancing broomsticks of Walt Disney and the scowling trees of Hieronymous Bosch. However, the sea and the ship in the Medusa are not represented as sentient, so they cannot be represented as expressing any emotions. One response to this objection attributes what depicted scenes express to a sentient creature who is not depicted—a 'persona,' for example (along the lines of Robinson (1994); Levinson (1996)). An alternative reply is that expression does not require emotion (Lopes (2005): 69–78). True, Green's account of expression in art is inconsistent with this reply, but that is no reason against the reply so long as we are considering the viability of the proposal that scene expression can play a role in distinctively pictorial empathic responses.

The component model of empathic response implies that pictures may exercise components of one type of empathic response by evoking a different type of empathic response which shares some of the same components. According to Green, some pictures make visible what certain emotions are like, but few types of empathic response involve an awareness of what an emotion is like. Another component of empathic response is engaged by pictures that represent scenes as intentional objects of emotions or that represent figures and scenes as expressing emotions. Moreover, some of these pictures engage empathy in distinctively pictorial ways—in ways not seen in ordinary perception. That takes care of the difference problem. What about the carryover problem?

8.5 Pictorial Referencing

Empathic responses are distinctively pictorial when pictures elicit empathy by means of scene expression: and as long as these responses contribute to empathic skill, then pictures contribute distinctively to empathic skill. The difference problem is solved. Yet the carryover problem looks as hopeless as ever. Suppose empathizing with the shipwrecks in the *Raft of the Medusa* involves seeing their despair as warranted by the ship's expressing indifference. How does this help us to empathize with people we see face-to-face unless we see bits of the inanimate world as expressing emotions? One might answer that we do in fact see bits of the inanimate world as expressing emotions —perhaps, indeed, as a result of familiarity with pictorial scene expression. However, this solution to the carryover problem unravels the solution to the difference problem. We must seek another kind of solution. Materials come from the phenomenon of social referencing.

Social referencing is a key strategy for dealing with a complex world where signals about what is harmful and beneficial, pleasant and painful are not always clear (see Feinman et al. (1992) for a review). Children confront a relatively high proportion of unfamiliar situations, and social referencing is crucial to their coping. In social referencing, one person uses another person's affective response to a situation in order to assess the situation, guide his behavior, and perhaps determine his own affective response. Children develop a capacity for this within their first year and it is fully in place by eighteen months. When put in an unfamiliar and ambiguous situation, they will try to keep within sight of their mother's face, they will engage in visual 'check back' behaviors, and they will inhibit play when she is preoccupied. When they do detect a significant expression on their mother's face, their behavior is profoundly modified. Clearly, social referencing involves reading facial expressions. It also means identifying the environmental situation that is the object of the emotion expressed, since the mother's look must be identified as expressing fear at the toy monster.

In general, social referencing comes in handy when it is not clear to an agent how she should respond to a situation in her environment. She checks with an expert, whose facial expression tells her what response is warranted. If the expert expresses fear,

she learns that the situation is dangerous. She can then generalize, honing her ability to detect danger and react appropriately.

As in social referencing, where one person uses another person's expression to cue an assessment of a shared situation, spectators can use what pictures express to cue assessments of a depicted scene. Of course, referencing may not be needed to assess the depicted scene. The wall of flames is evidently dangerous, and so is the sea in the *Raft of the Medusa*. However, assessments of situations can depend on quite subtle and sophisticated discrimination abilities, and they can have fine-grained contents. These features of depicted scenes can be cued by the expressions worn by depicted figures; and this amounts to a pictorial version of social referencing.

That is not all. What a scene expresses also cues the viewer into what emotional response the scene warrants, and thus indirectly implies an assessment of the scene. Keep in mind that social referencing is not mimicry; it is an advance on mimicry. The child checks the mother's face in order to find out about the world—to find out how to view the world in light of her mother's responding as she does. Likewise, scene expression can function to mark the features of a situation that warrant a response either reflecting or reacting to what is expressed. By marking features of a scene, the picture enables us to see the features as ones that warrant a certain response. Scene expression tags an assessment of the scene, just as does a mother's look of concern.

Any sailor knows that the sea is dangerous, and the sea in the Géricault is certainly depicted as rough. However, the sea's expression of malignant indifference brings home how dangerous it is and so how desperate is the plight of the shipwrecks. What the sea expresses makes sense of what the shipwrecks feel and express. At the same time, by showing what response is warranted, the sea's expression picks out features of the situation as warranting that response. It helps the viewer appraise the situation.

A kind of dramatic irony arises when an assessment implied by reactive scene expression conflicts with the assessment actually expressed by depicted figures. The scene expresses an emotion in response to which one is warranted in feeling E, but the depicted figures do not express E. They do not assess the situation in the same way as we are led to when we take in what the scene expresses. We know something that they do not. The skull in a memento mori painting expresses grief at a wasted life, but all this is wasted on the depicted figure who dances footloose upon the earth. Pictures that trade on this kind of dramatic irony display not only how to assess a situation but also illustrate how a situation can be assessed differently, as befitting different emotional responses. They put viewers in a position to judge what response is appropriate and hence to second or dissent from the emotion a figure is depicted as expressing. The lesson of social referencing is that expressions of emotion are doubly informative. A person's emotional expression tells us how they feel and it also tells us something about their situation. Indeed, the expression tells us about their situation by telling us how they feel. So we can learn to read situations by reading expressions reacting to those situations. Likewise, expressive scenes in pictures mark features of the scenes for the

purpose of appraising them. We can learn about the scenes and how to react to them from the messages about them carried by scene expression.

A solution to the carryover problem lies within reach. We respond empathically with some figures we see in pictures. Sometimes this response involves our seeing a scene as expressive, though the expression is not attributable to the figure. Since we do not normally see bits of the inanimate world as expressing anything, this is a distinctively pictorial response. Moreover, scene expression can play a referencing role, marking features of situations as warranting responses. The cognitive pay-off is that we learn to recognize situations as warranting certain responses even when the expressive element is removed. That is carryover. The carryover and difference problems are solved together.

In sum, pictures contribute to empathic skill. This is not because they directly engage every type of empathic response, nor is it merely because they engage some component of some empathic response. Rather, pictures engage a type of empathic response that has benefits for general empathic skill. They place their viewers in a position to attribute an emotion, to assess a scene, and to see the former as appropriate to the latter. In so far as they accomplish this through scene expression, they contribute to empathic skill in a distinctive manner.

Pictures are perceptual prostheses: they expand the power of perception (Lopes (1996)). Since perception leads to emotional responses and also to empathy in its various guises, it should be no surprise that pictures also expand empathic skill. What engages the heart tends to be absorbing, and so pictures like Adams's photograph, the *Third of May*, and the *Raft of the Medusa* address us as empathic creatures. Pictures are valuable in so far as we would be worse off as empathic creatures without them. You might now ask if this forms part of their aesthetic or artistic value, but that is a question for another occasion.[1]

[1] My thanks to audiences at Scripps College, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Fribourg for helpful suggestions—and especially to Amy Coplan, Fabian Dorsch, Peter Goldie, and two anonymous referees.