IS EMPATHY AN EMOTION?

by
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Abstract

The main aim of my thesis is to ascertain whether empathy has the required qualities of an emotion. Disagreement is rife regarding the process leading to the arousal of an emotion, which creates uncertainty as to what exactly an emotion is, and how it appears. This is the first issue I tackle in my work, as I concentrate on examining some of the significant cognitive and feeling theories of emotions. My study of these theories outlines their downsides, and I instead propose to retain a hybrid definition that combines the advantages of both families of theories to provide a balanced approach that recognises the importance of both physical changes and cognitions. The focus of my work then moves specifically onto empathy, with the intention of precisely defining this term too, its functioning, as well as the meaning of the expression 'feeling empathy for someone'. The existing literature on empathy fails to provide a clear understanding of empathy's classification as an emotion or a skill. My work is original in that I avoid assertions and clearly establish that empathy constitutes an emotion based on the definition of emotion I advance in the first part of my work.

A sa Sardigna mia amada chi is profumus e is arregordus funt sempir bivus in sa menti mia. Non timast Mama cara, sa die chi is Gigantis ant a tenni su coràgiu de bogai is bendas chi coberrint is ogus mannus circularis est acanta.

Translation:
To my beloved Sardinia, whose memories and perfumes are always on my mind.
Dear Mother, do not be afraid, the day will soon come when the Giants have the courage to remove the bandages covering their big, round eyes.

Acknowledgements

I take this opportunity to acknowledge three things. The first is that no matter how educated I may become, I will always remain a '*bidunca*' (chav) with eyes wide open, and I take great pride in that. Secondly, I would like to publicly acknowledge that Anouk can actually drive - my reference to her lack of skill was solely due to her request to be acknowledged in my PhD thesis. After all, she taught me English, so has every right to make demands. The last is that, due to the word count, I cannot thank everyone who supported me through these years; having an acknowledgement section longer than the actual thesis it is not sign of professionalism.

I have been lucky to be surrounded by people who not only helped me when I needed it the most, but also taught me to do the same for others. We shared our childhood, laughter, tears, both junk and Sardinian food, sci-fi and technology, school desks, the pink pastel, pencil sharpener, knowledge (FF and VGK among others) and, most importantly, they made me feel loved (especially my family). This is for you with the promise that, unless shyness plays its usual trick on me, I will thank you in person.

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Introduction

A human being without the proper empathy or feeling is the same as an android built so as to lack it, either by design or mistake. We mean, basically, someone who does not care about the fate which his fellow living creatures fall victim to; he stands detached, a spectator, acting out by his indifference John Donne's theorem that 'No man is an island,' but giving that theorem a twist: that which is a mental and a moral island *is not a man* (Dick, [1976]1997: 211).

In *Man, Android and Machine* (1976), the writer Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) defines empathy as the essence of human beings. Empathy is the feature which singles out human beings from androids: in its absence, one is little more than an empty shell, shaped to the contours of a human being and yet unable to do what humans do best: share the joys and sorrows of those around them. In everyday life, 'empathy' is often defined as the experience of connecting with others, of sharing what they feel and think; conventional wisdom puts it quite simply as 'being in someone else's shoes'. We have all watched a horror movie featuring a lonesome character and shuddered, kicked, and screamed when they were attacked by a monster. Or, at the sight of a friend been sad or happy, shared their emotional status, as if we were the person going through the emotions. We have, quite simply, felt empathy for them.

In recent times, there has been a strong emphasis on 'empathy' in both academic and everyday contexts; many see empathy's role as crucial in appeasing a world torn apart between embracing diversity and preserving cultural identities and social statuses. Some, like Jeremy Rifkin (2009), elevate empathy to a status of quasi-panacea and place it at the centre stage of an amelioration of the human condition: an Empathic Civilisation guided by the '*Homo Empathicus*' would eradicate threats such as climate change and ensure the survival of the human race. However, far from seeing empathy as the key to a better, safer world, other leading scholars, such as Paul Bloom (2016), contend that empathy is a poor

moral guide and does not necessarily lead to positive, compassionate actions; instead, sharing another person's emotions might cloud judgment. The debate rages outside the academic context also, with empathy being given a prime focus in famous speeches by Pope Francis and former President of the United States of America, Barack Obama. Both advocate that sharing the emotions of other persons would create a society increasingly open towards others, particularly those in need. 'Empathy' really is on everyone's lips, and although it is often associated with doing good towards others, there is little knowledge regarding how we connect with people and how this connection prompts us to act in their favour. Empirical studies have sought to elucidate just that, with modern technology enabling researchers to determine what empathy is, and how we can assume (simulate) another person's perspective.

The breakthroughs in empirical knowledge had a significant impact in many disciplines, amongst which philosophy. Empathy and philosophy have never been estranged: empathy features a strong presence in the history of philosophy, in particular with regards to issues such as choosing the best course of action, acting morally, or even solving issues that afflict societies. The progress made at empirical level offers philosophy new ground to determine what occurs when a person feels empathy, and the implications of this experience in practical life. Nevertheless, empirical and philosophical literature are still rather unclear as to the exact nature of empathy. In fact, this is another strongly debated question, with some considering empathy as a skill whilst others deem it to be an emotion. In any case, little effort has been devoted to justifying why empathy should belong to either category.

My thesis takes its shape from this very issue: philosophers often refer to empathy as the *magic wand* or *invisible hand* to solve the issues afflicting individuals and societies. However, it must be pointed out that no clear, widely accepted definition of the term currently exists which could be applied to tackle specific issues and be employed outside the moral or political sphere. Establishing such a definition proves critical: it will provide a

starting ground for further speculation on the topic, ensuring all stakeholders refer to the same, clearly delimited phenomenon when mentioning empathy. In other words, one cannot determine what role, if any, empathy is to play in our practical lives without first defining the notion's characteristic features.

What follows is an attempt to justify the hypothesis that empathy can legitimately be conceived as an emotion. To do so, I will first focus on achieving an account of emotions that is both philosophically and empirically adequate, leading to a clear definition of emotions. In doing so, I will advocate that a hybrid theory of emotions considering both the cognitive and physical components of the phenomenon is best suited to describe it. Throughout the thesis, the topic of the arousal of emotions will be brought up with the purpose of deliberating what elements constitute an emotion and how, if at all, these interact. Therefore, although the main subject is the role of cognitive and physical changes as components of emotions, discussion will also focus on the cognitive and physical features through which we represent the object which is the target of the emotion, and therefore causes us to experience it. Both the components of emotions and the cause for their arousal will then be employed to draw a comparison between emotions and empathy.

My argumentation regarding the components of emotions will be based on a review of several theories of emotions, beginning with what I consider to be *classical* theories and moving on to more contemporary ones. I will then focus on hybrid theories of emotions, i.e. those theories which consider emotions to be composed of both cognitive and physical changes. The adjective 'hybrid' refers to these theories' ability to combine features of emotions usually singularly examined in the classical theories with the purpose of reaching a better understanding of what happens when we experience emotions. Through the selected theories, I will not only identify the elements emotions are comprised of but also establish how a hybrid methodology can apply to emotions. Having ascertained the nature of emotions

in the first part of my work, I will devote the second to establishing that empathy possesses the characteristics of an emotion and can, therefore, legitimately be conceived as one. In doing so, I will refer to both the methodology and features of emotions identified by the theories selected in the first part of my thesis. Finally, I will distinguish empathy from sympathy, and assert that empathy does not necessarily lead to actions alleviating the suffering of others.

My approach combines both the empirical (psychological and biological data) and the philosophical literature; the elaboration of a theory capable of understanding and explaining emotions and empathy must call upon all available instruments and resources. I will consider the contribution of history of philosophy, both for emotions and empathy. The theories I have selected depict the manner in which the debate on the nature of empathy and emotions has been presented over the centuries; they have shaped and determined the way we still investigate the issue nowadays. The main benefits of this approach are twofold. Firstly, it will help to determine the correspondence between the features of emotions and empathy identified in philosophy as opposed to those identified in psychology and biology. Secondly, this choice will strengthen the assumption that the recent progress made in philosophy can and must benefit from the discoveries made in other fields.

My thesis is divided into eight chapters.

In chapter one, I examine the strengths and limitations of the major classical philosophical theories of emotions (cognitive, feeling, evolutionary, behaviourist and contextualist theories); those theories are labelled ‘classical’ because they constitute the core or base of the most contemporary theories. As the chapter unfolds, I will review how they differ in defining what emotions are, and in how they view their components. This will give a clear overview of the current positions on emotions and prove most useful in establishing a clear definition of the term at a later stage. My analysis of these theories will lead me to assess the

strengths and weaknesses of each of them, and to focus the rest of my work mainly on the cognitive and the feeling theories of emotions.

Chapter two concentrates on dismantling the myth that Aristotle's (384-322 BC) and Baruch Spinoza's (1632-1677) theories of emotions belong to the cognitive group: they should instead be considered as two 'rebel' cognitive theories. Indeed, the two philosophers long ago introduced the novel idea that feelings arise due to somatic changes which have an important role in the formulation of judgment, Aristotle with his concept of 'state of mind', and Spinoza with his notion of '*conatus*'. This is inconsistent with the classical cognitive theories, which conceive feelings only as a result of the judgment and not as a component of the emotion.

The feeling theories of emotions elaborated by Carl Georg Lange (1834-1900) and Antonio Damasio will be at the heart of chapter three. Lange's exclusive focus on somatic changes results in an incomplete explanation of emotions, but his novel approach is of interest in that it reconciles empirical knowledge with the description of emotions in popular culture, and highlights similarities between the two. This is an example of the hybrid methodology I referred to earlier, and I will mirror this approach at a later stage while I define the nature of empathy. Lange's theory is contrasted with Damasio's approach, which recognises the role of cognition as part of emotions and proposes a more complete alternative.

Chapter four emphasises the importance of both the somatic and cognitive changes in the arousal of emotions. I analyse Andrea Scarantino's argument regarding the elastic strategy employed by the recent cognitive theories of emotions to avoid criticism, and in doing so refer to Robert C. Solomon (1942-2007) as an instance. The importance of somatic and cognitive changes can only be reconciled with a hybrid approach to emotions, which recognises that the formulation of an evaluative judgment(s) regarding the object which is

the target of the emotion does not only require a cognition, but also depends on feelings caused by previous physical changes. Those feelings are determined by factors such as sensory experience, previous emotions about the object, moods, etc.

Chapter five examines the different uses of the word 'empathy' in the literature and everyday language. I reconstruct the use of 'empathy' and 'sympathy' as they first appeared in the literature. Both terms have often been used interchangeably, as synonyms. I rely on Peter Goldie's (1946-2011) work to highlight how the two notions have been misconstrued and propose a first, original definition of empathy in contrast with that of sympathy. The definitions are further enriched in the following chapters.

In chapter six, I reconcile the definitions of emotions and of empathy established separately in previous chapters. The comparison will demonstrate that empathy is an emotion which involves both cognition and somatic changes. I explain the interaction between those two components and claim that the arousal of empathy presents the same characteristics as the arousal of an emotion, as described in chapter four.

Chapter seven will feature the analysis of cases where the feeling of empathy is absent or felt with less intensity due to physical or mental impairments. I focus in particular on brain injuries, individuals suffering with psychopathic and narcissistic personality disorders, as well as Asperger syndrome. The analysis of those physical and mental ailments will confirm my assertions in chapters four and six that the relation between feelings and cognition is crucial for the experience of empathy. Where it has been impaired or compromised, empathy is either absent or felt with less intensity.

My attempt at clearly defining empathy as an emotion and ascertaining how it arises naturally led me to consider the consequences of my findings in the final chapter (eight) of my thesis. I will claim that empathy does not automatically lead to charitable actions and illustrate my assertion with examples of evil sympathy, i.e. actions using the empathy felt

for others to exploit or take advantage of their situation. Nevertheless, I propose that empathy can prove itself most beneficial in a community as it fosters equality: empathy allows us to experience what others feel, creating a bond with them and leading to the realisation that they deserve the same treatment. This is especially true when reinforced with mechanisms (such as laws, culture, ethics, religion, etc.) promoting diversity while enshrining equality. The sustainability of the community is thus guaranteed.

Chapter I

Emotions: A battlefield of theories

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will gather and review some of the most significant philosophical theories of emotions and divide them into different categories: cognitive, feeling, evolutionary, behaviourist, and contextualist. I will refer to the classical versions of those theories, that is, the features that constitute the basic core of the current theories of emotions. My brief examination will not limit itself to the study of the philosophical literature, but will also encompass the useful contribution of empirical science to the study of emotions, and its potential to enrich and constrain philosophical theories of emotions. This methodological choice assumes that a more comprehensive understanding of emotions in philosophy will necessarily involve and take account of the best available psychological and biological data on emotions; the resulting philosophical theory will be constrained by this.

Philosophy, interpreted as a love for wisdom, requires curiosity and the willingness to use all available instruments (or even create new ones) to uncover the truth. The topic of emotions must be investigated deploying the same approach: if its purpose is to reach the most comprehensive understanding of emotions, philosophy can no longer remain deaf to the discoveries made in other fields. At the same time, breakthroughs in other disciplines have confirmed or helped revise philosophical theories. This has allowed philosophy to regain its credibility as an original instrument of knowledge despite the contemporary emphasis on empirical science. The interaction between the two disciplines is needed to gain a better understanding of emotions, and philosophy has a role to play in creating a bridge

connecting the several subjects making up empirical science. What follows is an overview of the main theories of emotions which focuses predominantly on their key aspects and limitations; the study of those features will be the starting point to discuss the hybrid theories of emotions outlined in the first part of the thesis.

1.2 Verifiability and significance

I will here determine the two criteria a theory of emotions must satisfy to stand out in this battlefield of theories, and will then refer to the aspects of emotions that even rival theories accept as central. As already asserted in the introduction, my account of the classical theories of emotions will highlight their key aspects, but also their blind spots. In the literature, emotions have been defined using conflicting hypotheses based on incompatible premises. This is especially true with regards to what causes the arousal of an emotion, how such arousal takes place and the effects it has on the organism experiencing it. Although the topic of emotions has engendered prolific literature, a dominant theory capable of reaching universal acceptance has not yet emerged. And indeed, the need for a dominant or widely accepted theory is pressing: more and more often, we resort to emotions to explain other phenomena affecting the body and mind, and influencing the way we think and act. Without an account of emotions accepted as accurate in the scientific community, progress proves impossible as studies are deprived of a stable ground or starting point, and results achieved cannot therefore be reliable or comparable.

The two criteria a theory of emotions must satisfy in order to be retained as dominant are based on Melvin L. Goldstein's work. He claims that a meaningful definition of emotions, irrespective of the type of theory that makes use of it, must follow the two criteria any scientific concept must abide by: verifiability and significance (Goldstein, 1968: 23). Those two criteria were first identified by psychologist Kenneth Spence (1907-1967) in reference

to the methods used in behaviourist theories; to him, psychology's purpose is to bring order and meaning to events captured through immediate experience (Spence, 1948: 69). As this is the purpose of psychology, Spence deems it necessary that the concepts used to describe those events follow the criteria of verifiability and significance (Spence, 1948: 70). He does not further unpack what he means by verifiability, and only states that a body of empirical knowledge cannot be constructed without providing verifiability for the terms used (Spence, 1948: 70). For instance, the word 'atom' can be adopted only to indicate the smallest component of an element which cannot undergo further division; in chemistry, a component can be called 'atom' only when experiments show that it cannot be divided. Thus, chemistry as body of empirical knowledge verifies that the word 'atom' is used solely to indicate components that exhibit a certain property (be indivisible). Goldstein adds that a concept is verified when its use and meaning remain unchanged no matter who the investigator using it is (Goldstein, 1968: 23). As for significance, Spence underlines that the significance of a concept is the extent to which it leads to the formulation of the laws that rule the functioning of the event studied (Spence, 1948: 71).

Goldstein, and Spence before him, argue that in order to be scientific, behavioural psychology must determine in detail the content of the concepts used to describe the phenomena it investigates. Taking a cue from this, I will employ the two criteria in reference and adapt them to what constitutes a dominant theory of emotions in philosophy. 'Verifiability' is intended here as the discovery of a concept of emotion that reduces the ambiguity generated by different studies and theories and that clearly determines the core features of an emotion, its causes and effects. 'Significance' consists in the measurement of the applicability of the concept ('emotion') to the researched phenomena, that is a concept of emotions that assists in identifying and distinguishing emotions from other phenomena and whose rules of use can be applied outside the bounds of the study of emotions in

philosophy.

I will resort to an example to set out the importance of those two criteria to determine whether a theory of emotions has the potential to become dominant. Take, for example, the concept of 'duty'. A duty is generally defined as something one is obliged to do; we refer to different types of duty depending on the nature or cause of the obligation and the type of punishment faced where the obligation is not fulfilled. But, overall, the assumption is common to all types of duty that they denote something that should or should not be done. Without this definition of 'duty', we would be unable to identify different types of duty such as, for instance, civic duties, moral duties, religious duties, etc. The same is applicable to 'emotion': without a definition of emotion determining how it differs from other events, we are unable to distinguish between emotions and other phenomena such as body reflexes, cognitive judgments, etc. or even to classify different types of emotions.

In the philosophical tradition, emotions have been studied as an ancillary topic to morality or reason. But this has recently changed, and emotions feature prominently in contemporary philosophical debates. What can explain this change? In the introduction of *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (2010), Goldie identifies four reasons justifying the increased attention on the field of emotions. The first lies in the increased attention paid to emotions as a subject of study in the psychological and neurobiological sciences. Philosophers have also become more aware of the importance of emotions in practical reason, acknowledging that emotions are not a problem to be investigated only through empirical psychology. Furthermore, a change occurred in the ethical debate. Scholars examining the work of Aristotle and David Hume (1711-1776), who argued that emotions constitute an important element in ethical conduct, challenged the thus far more influential position of Kantian and utilitarian ethics. Finally, there is a renewed interest in emotions in relation to aesthetics and, in particular, in the effect of emotions on our

perception of art (Goldie, 2010: 1-3). I believe another reason is worth mentioning which Goldie does not consider: the development of new technologies. Robotic research is a field in constant growth and, although robots have been created with intellectual abilities arguably akin (or even superior) to those of human beings, the replication of human emotional sensitivity has proven much harder to achieve (Picard, 2003: 61). Creating machines that not only reason similarly to human beings, but are also able to understand their needs and serve them better and faster is not only a technological feat; it first and foremost presupposes the successful replication of human emotions, and empathy especially.

While over ninety definitions of the word 'emotion' have been proposed in the course of the 20th century (Plutchik, 2001: 344), most of them recognise at least the following two features: a physiological change in the body, and a cognitive state labelled as an emotion by the organism who experiences the phenomenon (Cohn, 1992: 4). Take, for instance, the emotions of joy and anger. If 'I always feel joy when I look at the sea', the view of the sea causes physical changes that are indirectly observable (occurring in the brain and the nervous system) and directly observable (my body looks more relaxed, I might smile, jump, etc.). Cognitive changes are also produced due to the memories, current experiences, past and new sensations which looking at the sea brings me back to. Similarly, when 'I am angry at the plumber', anger will cause indirectly and directly observable physiological changes (my body looks tense, my face becomes red, my eyes are wide open, etc.), as well as cognitive changes associated to the way the plumber performed their job and how this made me feel. The physical and cognitive changes can vary depending on the emotion felt, the target of the emotion, and the person feeling that emotion. Whilst, in general, the definitions of emotions provided in the literature agree that cognitive and physiological changes are involved in emotions, they differ on the role of those changes, their relationship, their nature, their effects, and their causes.

1.3 The classical cognitive theories of emotions

I will begin with a reconstruction of the basic core of the classical cognitive theories of emotions and explain the passage from evaluative judgments to appraisals. Within the classical cognitive theories of emotions, the term 'cognitive' refers to something that pertains to a belief, the interpretation of a thing or a state of affairs (Calhoun and Solomon, 1984: 20). Emotions are considered "either wholly or partially cognitions or as being logically or casually dependent on cognition" (Calhoun and Solomon, 1984: 20). Their intentionality is what identifies an emotion and the fact that they are directed at a target is expressed in the form of evaluative judgments (Oatley and Johnson-Laird, 2014: 134; Deigh, 2010: 25; Solomon, 1973: 26). From now on and for the rest of the thesis, I will use the term 'target' to indicate the person, the animal, the object, the situation, etc. which is the object of the judgment or the emotion.

Generally, the word 'evaluation' is used to indicate the examination of a target; its purpose is to identify the quality or value of the object in question. In the case of emotions, an evaluative judgment is a proposition about an individual, group, behaviour or situation which is considered to be true by the person formulating the judgment. Evaluative judgments possess an intentional character, which is expressed by the fact that those judgments are always directed at a target (Deigh, 1994: 826). When referring to judgments, the term 'evaluative' also indicates that their formulation is influenced by several factors such as beliefs, the vocabulary adopted, and the individual's interpretation of the situation and target (Cohn, 1992: 4).

The evaluative judgments are believed to be true because they are considered appropriate in the particular circumstances (Cohn, 1992: 4); for instance, my anger at the plumber is motivated by the fact that I evaluate his job as not having been carried out properly. Therefore, I feel/think that he did not respect the agreement we entered into when I hired

him. If emotions are made of evaluative judgments about certain targets, the physical changes occurring when an emotion is felt are a consequence of those judgments; physical changes and their awareness (feelings) do not have an active role in the arousal of emotions as they appear only after the judgment has been formulated. Thus, emotions are physically expressed through specific types of feelings differing from those which are due to sensations and physiological disturbance (Deigh, 2010: 25).

Here is an example of the difference between the physical changes caused by an emotion and those due to a bodily reaction:

> When, after sudden exertion, say, one is short of breath and feels weak or wobbly, the feeling is symptomatic of respiratory difficulty and nothing more. If, by contrast, upon a sudden attack of panic one is short of breath and feeling wobbly, the feeling is not just a symptom of respiratory difficulty. It concerns, rather, something of which one is intensely afraid and what determines the object of one's fear is the judgment that one is in danger' (Deigh, 2010: 25).

The difference between the panic attack and the respiratory difficulty described in the quote lies in that the former requires an evaluative judgment whilst the latter stems from an anomaly in the body. With regards to the peculiarity of the physiological changes that occur during an emotion, Robert Solomon (1942-2007) emphasises that emotions "are intentional, i.e. emotions are about 'something'" (Solomon, 1973: 21). Following Solomon's argument, my anger at the plumber comprises of two elements: the feeling of anger and the motivation or reason that led me to that feeling. As a feeling, anger does not have an intentional direction, says Solomon: it is the evaluative judgment about specific properties of the target that displays a direction (Solomon, 1973: 22). Accordingly, in the example above, my feeling of anger is directed to a specific element: my belief that the plumber did not do his job properly. My judgment might be erroneous and the plumber may have done a perfectly fine job, but my anger will be legitimate for so long as I believe my judgment to be appropriate in the circumstances. As a result, what differs in the physiological changes that take place during an emotion and those caused by a physical anomaly is that the first are always caused

by the interaction that we have with a target (they are about something) as they find their roots in an evaluative judgment about that specific target.

The assumption made by the classical cognitive theories of emotions that evaluative judgments are the main aspect of emotions has led to difficulties, most of which regard the explanation of automatic reflex and the arousal of emotions in human infants and non-human animals. I will now consider two of the challenges faced by the classical cognitive theories. The first, Michael Stocker's fear of flying (Stocker and Hegeman, 1996: 38-39), criticises the hypothesis that emotions' key feature is evaluative judgments. Take a person's fear of flying; knowledge that airplanes are one of the safest (if not the safest) means of transportation does not assuage the fear, although safety statistics and evidence presented should deter any evaluative judgment of airplanes as unsafe and prevent the arousal of fear. One might argue that, in this case, the fear experienced is irrational because the feeling is disproportionate to the judgment and the actual passenger's safety. However, where the fear is intense, knowledge that their feeling is *incorrect* (disproportionate) will not calm the unfortunate passenger.

Another challenge for the classical cognitive theories of emotions resides in that asserting that emotions entail evaluative judgments implies that those who experience emotions possess the faculty to grasp and affirm propositions, an ability provided only through language. Since human infants have not yet developed the language skills required to feel emotions and non-human animals do not have a language displaying the same particularities as that used by humans, it would seem that the basic core of the classical cognitive theories of emotions fails to provide an explanation for the emotions felt by members of those two categories (Deigh, 2010: 27; Deonna and Teroni, 2012: 58; Deigh, 1994).

Whereas the classical cognitive theories of emotions use judgments as a key feature for their description, contemporary cognitive theories adopt a softer approach to characterise the

cognitive side of emotions. This change is rooted in the need for the classical cognitive theories of emotions to respond to the challenges above and to make their views appealing to those attributing an active role to feelings in the study of emotions. The word 'judgment', which suggests higher conceptual sophistication, is less frequently used and has often been integrated into, or swapped with, the concept of 'appraisal'. In this regard, several scholars adopt the concept of appraisal to indicate the cognitive side of emotions, but not all are of the same mind with regards to which specific appraisals elicit emotions. See, for instance, Magda B. Arnold (1960); Nico H. Frjida (1986); Richard S. Lazarus (1990); Ira J. Roseman, Ann A. Antoniou and Paul E. Jose (1996).

In reference to emotions, an appraisal is an evaluation of the implications and meanings of the events and persons who play a role in our emotional life (Oatley and Johnson-Laird, 2014: 134). The term 'appraisal' was first coined by Magda Arnold (1903-2002) to indicate an immediate and intuitive evaluation (Ellsworth and Scherer, 2002: 572). She believed that, to survive, an organism constantly evaluates the relevance of the changes occurring in their environment. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the absence or presence of stimuli, their beneficial or harmful character and the ease with which they can be approached or avoided. Those evaluations or appraisals are then expressed as emotions (Ellsworth and Scherer, 2002: 572). The meaning of appraisal as established by Arnold still finds its place in the appraisal theories of emotions which generally agree on the idea that the evaluations of the organisms about their circumstances, whether present, past or imagined, have a fundamental role to constitute and differentiate emotions. (Ellsworth and Scherer, 2002: 572). Scholars from different theoretical traditions seem to agree with Robert I. Levi's (1924-2003) appraisal model of emotions (1984) as summarised by Steven F. Cohn in these words:

> This model suggests that emotional responses contain four stages: an initial appraisal of a stimulus; a reaction to this appraisal that generates changes in bodily sensations and,

> perhaps, involuntary expressive gestures; a cognitive evaluation of the bodily feeling and gestures which involves the attachment of an emotional label to the feeling; and the expression of the emotion in behaviour (Cohn, 1992: 5).

In this model, an organism aware of receiving one or more stimuli evaluates their content (appraisal), which leads to a physical reaction that can manifest itself in several ways. The physical reaction is then evaluated by the organism which labels what was felt as an 'emotion'. Thus, for the cognitive appraisal theories of emotions, specific emotions (for instance, 'joy', 'fear', 'anger', etc.) are labels indicating the association of a stimulus with specific physical reactions. For example, the term 'anger' encompasses certain physical reactions that derive from the appraisal of a stimulus: flushed face, high tone of voice, eyes wide open, stiff body, and so on.

The concept of appraisal in Levi's theory of emotions can solve the classical cognitive theories of emotions' inability to explain emotions felt by human infants and non-human animals. If appraisals do not require a language, all those capable of receiving and evaluating the content of a stimulus are fit to feel an emotion. However, Levi's model might also present a limitation: even though emotions are often linked to specific physical reactions, those reactions vary in individuals. Thus, basing the interpretation of emotions on physical changes will only invariably lead to misinterpretation in some cases. For instance, some might react to fear caused by the presence of a wild and dangerous animal by freezing on the spot where others run and a third group decides to fight the animal. The identity of the person feeling the emotion and the circumstances will determine the reaction.

1.4 The classical physiological or feeling theories of emotions

Where the classical cognitive theories focus on evaluative judgments as the fundamental part of emotions, the feeling or physiological theories deny their role as components of emotions, and instead purport that emotions' only feature are feelings. In this section, I will introduce

the basic core of the feeling theories of emotions and present William James's (1842-1910) theory as one of the first of this type.

According to the feeling theories of emotions, emotions are a type of experience belonging to the same genus as phenomena including sensations, itches, and perceptions (Sousa, 1987: 187; Whiting, 2006: 263). Another characteristic of the feeling theories is that they directly refer to the phenomenology of emotions (the way they manifest themselves to us). This is because: a) all emotions have an affective nature or character and are experienced as having a subjective feel; b) each emotion possesses a different (distinctive) feel, namely each emotion feels different; c) according to the phenomenology of emotions, the subjective feeling that belongs to a certain emotion is sufficient to explain the nature of that emotion (Whiting, 2011: 282).

For Demian Whiting, who believes that emotions are just feeling states, several reasons justify the assumption that emotions can be identified and described based on how they feel (Whiting, 2006: 263). Firstly, referring to Hume, Whiting outlines that emotional feelings arise due to causes which differ from the ones that elicit other types of feelings. For instance, physical pain like a stomach ache emanates from a physical (non-mental) cause; meanwhile, when someone feels they have been betrayed and liken their feelings to a punch in the stomach, the emotional feeling is caused by mental states (perceptions, beliefs, desires, etc.) (Whiting, 2006: 263). Thus, emotional feelings have a different phenomenological location from other feelings; if emotional feelings and other types of feelings are connected to the same body part, the feelings elicited are not perceived by an organism in the same way (Whiting, 2006: 263). Secondly, emotional feelings have intentional objects while other types of feelings do not (Whiting, 2006: 263); for instance, in the example at the beginning of this Chapter, my anger is directed at the plumber.

One of the first approaches used by the feeling theories of emotions belongs to James.

The major features of his theory will be used as an illustration of the basic core of the classical feeling theories of emotions. James's thesis was that 'the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion' (James, 1884: 189-190). James challenges the hypothesis that, in the case of emotions, cognition takes place before feelings:

> Common sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run; we are insulted by a rival, and angry and strike. The hypothesis here to be defended says that this order of sequence is incorrect […] and that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike or tremble, because we are sorry, angry or fearful, as the case may be. Without the bodily states following on the perception, the latter would be purely cognitive in form, pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth. We might then see the bear, and judge it best to run, receive the insult and deem it right to strike, but we should not actually feel afraid or angry (James, 1884: 190).

In stark contrast to the classical cognitive theories of emotions, James contends that feelings are elicited prior to evaluative judgments. It is conceivable to assume that feelings in this case are intended as a result of the physical changes arising in us due to the interaction with a target. Therefore, for James, the evaluative judgment intended as awareness of undergoing physical changes is the result of those feelings. In other words, emotions are the physical changes that take place in our body and mind when we interact with a certain target; the evaluation (judgment) of our encounter with the target is what we generally define as an emotion. However, James contends that this should not be labelled as the emotion as this representation only follows the somatic changes which he considers to be the real components of emotion. In this regard, he asserts that if the judgment was the only component or our emotions, emotions would be pale, colourless or, in other words, would not possess the physical elements (feelings) that distinguish them from a 'dispassionate judicial sentence, confined entirely to the intellectual realm' (James, 1884: 194). Therefore, feelings are constitutive of emotions because feelings provide emotions with that lively and colourful character which distinguishes them from other activities of the mind.

James is aware of the objections his definition of emotions as feelings attracts. One

rebuttal is as follows: if an emotion merely is the feeling of a body reflex caused by the interaction that we have with a target, the repetition of this interaction over time determines an ingrained adaption of the nervous system that leads us to react in a specific way whenever facing the same target. This presupposes that an individual's emotions adapt in light of the changes in their nervous system (James, 1884: 194). However, James believes that the adaptation of the nervous system is not a mere hypothesis and that it can be confirmed: the association of a given feeling of a body reflex with a specific target derives from an educational process through which one was taught to react in a certain manner (James, 1884: 194-195). Evidence of this, according to James, is the fact that different societies interpret the same behaviour in diverse manners; a behaviour classed as offensive by one group of people may be perfectly accepted by another (James, 1884: 195-196).

Although James believes that feelings have a different function to that advocated in the classical cognitive theories of emotions, he introduces the concept of ideal emotion, which is comparable to the notion of evaluative judgment. James asserts that "an ideal emotion seems to precede the bodily symptoms, it is often nothing but a representation of the symptoms themselves" (James, 1884: 197). Ideal emotions are not mental states, says James, but an expectation that what happened to us in the past in a certain situation will happen again if the past repeats itself in the future (James, 1884: 197). For instance, says James, an individual who faints at the sight of blood may experience high anxiety when witnessing the preparation for a surgical operation; those physical changes can be interpreted as fear of fear (James, 1884: 197). James's use of the concept of expectation (or ideal emotion) to justify certain reactions seems to function in a similar manner as the concept of judgment used by the classical cognitive theories of emotions. James believes that we can predict or anticipate changes that will occur in our body (ideal emotion), and that those predictions can dictate physical changes in the person who formulates them. To sustain itself, the justification of

the ideal emotion preceding the feeling needs to involve a thought of any type, conscious or unconscious. Therefore, although James attempts to deny the importance of mental states as constitutive of emotions, he finds himself referring to a mental state to explain ideal emotions and their effect on the body.

One of the major critiques formulated against both James's theory and the classical feeling theories of emotions is that they do not provide a general explanation of emotions because some emotions are not always associated with specific physical changes. Take, for instance, the case of a long lasting emotion such as love: one can be in love with someone for a long time and yet the body is not constantly physically aroused (Prinz, 2004: 49). James clearly circumscribes his study to that type of emotions which exhibit 'a distinct bodily expression' (James, 1884: 189). Consequently, his failure to provide a general explanation for all emotions is rooted in that his major concern is to define and explicate those emotions that can exhibit specific physical features.

To James, there are two types of targets responsible for the arousal of emotions: physical and intellectual. The physical targets are those for which the mental representation is caused by sensory experiences (perceptions, sensations, etc.); meanwhile, intellectual targets involve a mental representation based exclusively on thoughts (memories, associations of ideas, plans, etc.) (James, 1884: 189). James considers both the targets and the emotions which arise as a matter of study for so long as they lead to feelings of an intensity insufficiently strong to cause a visible physical change in the body, such as a change in the breath and pulse, a bodily motion, or a facial expression.

1.5 The classical evolutionary theories of emotions

Whilst the classical cognitive and feeling theories of emotions focus on determining and identifying the components involved in the arousal of emotions, the three remaining groups

of theories tackle the problem from a different perspective. The overarching objective in the classical evolutionary theories of emotions is to determine the purpose of emotions and the manner in which they have changed in light of the evolutionary processes. I will now discuss the origin of the classical evolutionary theories of emotions and concentrate on the different classifications of emotions they advance.

Evolutionary psychology is based on empirical findings deriving from biology and neuroscience; it asserts that our minds operate based on programmes that are fit to solve specific adaptive problems which arose throughout the evolution of human and non-human animals. These include sleep regulation, face recognition, the choice of mates, etc. The existence of those programmes regulating our mind's activity generates an adaptive problem: several programmes designed to solve specific problems might become active at the same time and send conflicting signals, thus compromising the tasks conducted by other programmes. For instance, an organism, even when physically tired, cannot sleep if it feels fear and recognises the need to run for its life (Tooby and Cosmides, 2008: 116). In this case, the organism must remain alert to survive and any somatic signs of fatigue must be blocked and kept under control to avoid the danger. This model based on programmes that solve specific adaptive problems cannot operate alone. It requires another element to oversee the programmes and avoid conflicts between different programmes: a mind that possesses superordinate programmes with the function of determining which programmes should run and how and when they should cooperate. Such programmes are the emotions. For instance, the superordinate programmes shut down the sleep programme when the organism needs to be wide awake and aware because of nearby threats (Tooby and Cosmides, 2008: 116).

According to evolutionary theories, emotions are models of functioning which have led to the establishment of patterns to guide cognitive, physiological, motivational, behavioural and subjective responses. This has, in turn, increased the opportunities of adapting to

recurring situations over evolutionary time (Nesse and Ellsworth, 2009: 129). Even though there is usually consistency in the emotional responses of similar organisms, genetic and environmental differences and the interaction between these two elements may cause some degree of variation (Nesse and Ellsworth, 2009: 134). Variations in emotional responses may also find their root in the reoccurrence of certain conditions, incidents, or situations individuals have experienced. In these cases, the emotional responses which have proven useful or successful in solving the situation are selected and their repetition determines the outbreak and shape of specific emotions as superordinate programmes that direct the activities of the mind and the body (Tooby and Cosmides, 2008: 117).

Three types of classification of emotions appear in the evolutionary theories of emotions. Considering that these theories assert that the purpose of the arousal of emotions is to increase the fitness level of an organism, some researchers have attempted to create a taxonomy of emotions dividing them into two categories by using a functional approach. Positive emotions stimulate the body to take advantage of the environment and recognise when this has been achieved. Negative emotions stimulate the body to avoid misfortune and enable us to, for example, escape, attack, or prevent harm (Nesse and Ellsworth, 2009: 132). Another type of classification is based upon the function of each emotion for the organism: for instance, anger leads to an attack and fear causes the attempt to escape something dangerous. Nevertheless, this type of analysis has proven difficult because it is impossible to classify and clearly determine the function of all emotions. Every emotion has several functions which operate in harmony with functions belonging to other emotions. Thus, each emotion cannot be analysed singularly because emotions operate together, aiming at achieving what is best for an organism (Nesse and Ellsworth, 2009: 132). For instance, anger does not only incentivise an organism to attack but, in certain circumstances, triggers defence mechanisms or inactivity.

The last type of classification emanates from researchers like Paul Ekman who focus on determining what emotions to consider basic. Ekman asserts that singling out basic emotions is beneficial for the following reasons: a) it supports the hypothesis that there are specific emotions that exhibit particular features; b) it contributes to the hypothesis that certain emotions are shaped by evolution, and more specifically have evolved in accordance with their role in fundamental life tasks; c) it can also provide assistance in the identification of those elements which, once connected, determine the arousal of more complex emotions (for instance, smugness might be caused by happiness and contempt) (Ekman, 1999: 45-47).

Although researchers disagree on the number of basic emotions, the vast majority generally include joy, distress, anger, fear, surprise and disgust (Evans, 2003: 5). In table 1 below, I lay out some of the criteria an emotion must satisfy to be considered basic, as proposed by Eva - Maria Engelen and colleagues.

TABLE 1- Criteria used to determine whether an emotion is basic

Criteria	Features
Irreducibility	• An emotion must be irreducible or pure. • It must be possible to clearly distinguish an emotion from another emotion. • For instance, joy is different from love, and love, which is not a basic emotion, may contain joy (Engelen et al., 2010: 27).
Universality	• An emotion must be universal. • All social groups must be demonstrated to possess it. • This basic pattern is shaped by culture, but it does not develop in all cultures in the same way and intensity (Engelen et al., 2010: 27).
Based on an innate affect programme	• Emotions have an innate affect programme, they are determined phylogenetically. • They belong to human and non-human animals and the way we experience them is influenced by evolution (Engelen et al., 2010: 27).
Early emergence	• An emotion should appear very early in ontogenesis (the stages of development of an organism). • They should disappear very late during the course of brain degeneration (Engelen et al., 2010: 27).
Immediate and significant, automatic bodily change	• An emotion must express itself through significant, universal bodily change. • For example, when someone is frightened they will grow cold and sweaty (Engelen et al., 2010: 27).

Short duration of arousal	• Once the cause of an emotion has disappeared, the emotion may persist for a short time. • It generally lasts no longer than a few minutes and hardly ever for hours (Engelen et al., 2010: 27-28).
Distinctive (facial) expression readable by others	• Each emotion features a distinct facial and postural expression that others can easily recognise and interpret as an expression of that particular emotion (Engelen et al., 2010: 27).
No need for a self–image	• Basic emotions can be experienced without the involvement of consciousness or self–image. • Any emotion that requires a self–image cannot be included in the group of basic emotions. • In fact, neonates and adults suffering from senile dementia display basic emotions without being able to have a self–image (Engelen et al., 2010: 27).
No need for thoughts	• Despite basic emotions involving cognitive processes such as stimuli and perceptions, • they do not require higher cognition such as deduction, planning, decision-making or evaluation (Engelen et al., 2010: 27).

The classification of emotions into basic and non-basic categories concerns both human and non-human animals and leads to at least two issues that I will now examine. The first concerns the question of whether a set of basic emotions exists or not. The type of criteria used to determine whether an emotion is basic omits that emotions are determined by factors such as language and culture, all of which might cause a variation in the type and structure of emotions felt by different organisms (Engelen et al., 2010: 28-29). However, one might argue that there is no difference in the basic emotions felt by organisms, and that any reported differences rely purely on the lexical words used to describe them. For instance, the Japanese word '*amae*' is used to indicate the comfort that derives from feeling accepted by others. Yet the fact the English language does not possess any word to express the same concept does not mean that English people do not feel this emotion (Evans, 2003: 2). The second issue is that, in everyday life, an emotion rarely occurs in a pure form, and it is therefore not possible to sharply divide them and identify which are basic. For instance, test anxiety, which is caused by the thought of not being able to accomplish a task, is connected to other aspects such as shame and fear of failure (Engelen et al., 2010: 29).

1.6 The classical behaviourist and contextualist theories of emotions

In this section, I will review both the classical behaviourist and classical contextualist theories of emotions; the former is concerned with the types of behaviours that emotions elicit, while the latter focuses on the relationship between emotions and the context in which they take place.

According to the classical behaviourist theories, emotions can be explained as the result of learning, conditioning, adaption and inhibition (McGill and Welch, 1946: 101). This type of approach was first developed at a time when psychology was keen to distance itself from philosophy and affirm itself as a natural science, i.e. a discipline which defines the laws and principles of human beings' reactions through experiments and observations (Lyons, 1980a: 17). Following the methodology developed for natural sciences, behavioural theories adopt a sceptical attitude: what cannot be publicly observed (such as a conscious feeling) can be known and defined only in terms of its manifestations (Sousa, 1987: 38).

In the behavioural approach, emotions can be a pattern of behaviour, disposition, or dispositional disposition (Sousa, 1987: 38). As patterns of behaviour, emotions are associated to specific somatic reactions that can be identified and classified. Physical changes and body movements are considered fundamental to the understanding of the manifestation of emotions; however, the interpretation of those changes is not universally applicable and can vary according to the individual, situation and culture at stake (McGill and Welch, 1946: 100). Other emotions (such as love, resentment and anger) are considered as dispositions as they occur only in certain conditions and are always directed at a target that can be either a living being or an object. On certain occasions, those emotions can be misplaced and directed at someone or something that is not the *real* target (Sousa, 1987: 38); for instance, a person who is angry at their brother may display such anger at their sister. Instead, an emotion is defined as a dispositional disposition when reinforced by certain

behaviours (Sousa, 1987: 39); for example, aspects of the character or appearance of a loved one may not seem outstanding to people who are not in love with this person, but be extraordinary to someone who is.

Their interest in the behaviours caused by emotions mean the classical behaviourist theories struggle to create a comprehensive theory of emotions because the behaviours expressed by individuals are partially determined by factors such as personality, culture of belonging, circumstances and language. As already stated, the behaviourist theories of emotions focus on the physical changes and body movements that are directly observable in our behaviours and determined by the arousal of emotions. Indeed, they focus on how an emotion reveals itself through behavioural manifestations and omit the cognitive and non-directly observable aspect of emotions which is thought not to be as interesting as those features of emotions cannot be detected in an empirical manner. The premise underpinning the behavioural theories that only the behavioural manifestations of emotions should be studied does not constitute in itself a limitation of those theories because the role of cognitions and feelings as components of emotions is not denied, but simply considered of no interest. However, limiting the study of emotions to the behavioural manifestation of emotions runs the risk of only reaching a partial understanding of those manifestations; only the surface of those manifestations is examined while their cause remains in the shadows.

If the behaviourist theories focus on how emotions manifest themselves, the classical contextualist theories of emotions emphasise that emotions can be interpreted only in relation to the linguistic context and the situation in which they are expressed. The division between behaviourist and contextualist is here based on the work of Ronald De Sousa (1987) who considers the contextualist theories as an independent group of theories; however, these two kinds of theories do not seem so distant regarding their content as both deal with the way we express our emotions.

The contextualist theories of emotion find their roots in the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). Before moving forward with my reconstruction of the contextualist theories of emotions, I must therefore digress and introduce Wittgenstein's concept of 'language game'. To Wittgenstein, philosophy is not responsible for creating a new language or interfering with the use made of the current language: instead, philosophy's aim should be to describe language and proceed with a study of its grammar (Wittgenstein, [1953]1967: 42). To that effect, he distinguishes between surface and depth grammar. The former concerns the way a word is used in the construction of a sentence, whilst the latter encompasses the different types of use that can be made of a sentence in different contexts or situations (Wittgenstein, [1953]1967: 168). Wittgenstein's concept of language-game is about the type of use we make of symbols, words, and sentences. The idea is that use is not fixed or unchangeable: new uses can arise and old ones disappear or change over time (Wittgenstein, [1953]1967: 11). For instance, the word 'game' might be utilised to describe the activity of moving objects on a surface based on certain rules; however, this definition does not apply to all games (Wittgenstein, [1953]1967: 3). According to Wittgenstein, we use 'games' to refer to different things such as card-games, ball-games, and Olympic games. The common features in those different uses gives rise to a 'family resemblance', i.e. a network of similarities holding together the various ways in which the word 'game' is used (Wittgenstein, [1953]1967: 32). Much like family members sharing some, albeit not all physical features, the different uses of the word 'game' can be related in some aspects yet differ in others: board-games and card-games are both usually played while sitting, but only board-games involve the use of pawns.

The notion of language game proposed by Wittgenstein shows that, in order to be understood by others, those using a language must be aware of the rules governing it and follow them when communicating. As seen with the example of 'games', the meaning of

words depends on the context in which they are used. For Wittgenstein grammar is arbitrary, that is, the rules of grammar do not originate in any pre-existing meaning of the words but different laws are imaginable and consequently possible (Bellucci, 2013: 5). Therefore, efficient communicators must ensure that those words match the context, failing which misunderstandings may occur.

Now that I have specified Wittgenstein's concept of language game, I can tackle the issue of how we express our emotions. For Wittgenstein, experiencing emotions is important but not solely sufficient to enable us to talk or express them to other people. A language made by public criteria, which has the ability to be taught and verified in its proper or correct use is what enables us to share our emotions (Mascolo, 2009: 262). Consequently, the use of 'emotion' or similar terms does not derive from an introspective analysis through which we realise that the somatic and cognitive changes taking place are an emotion, but from an agreed use of the word 'emotion' in accordance with the principles that govern a language (Wittgenstein, [1953]1967: 100). Wittgenstein says that, for instance, we acquire the meaning of the word 'pain' not due to our experience of pain but from the use of this word by other individuals; the experience of pain can be described and communicated efficiently only when we have a word that allows to explain to others what we are feeling (Wittgenstein, [1953]1967: 100-101). Thus, words such as 'emotion' are a public manifestation of the somatic and cognitive changes that we experience; there is a relationship between the word 'emotion' and what is experienced. It is this relation that makes us understand each other when we use that word.

The classical contextualist theories which are based on Wittgenstein's theory of language face several potential issues. Firstly, if the meaning of the language used to describe emotions varies in different contexts, creating a single theory that explains what emotions are in general proves impossible because researchers would need to extrapolate the words

used from their context to describe emotions. If the use of 'emotion' is rooted in the context, 'emotion' and any term of such kind can be used without any misunderstanding between the communicative partners only in that context. Even creating different theories to explain emotions using a language in connection to several contexts cannot be simple to achieve, as the person who does the research should master this language and know all the facets of the words as well as their use in specific contexts. This aspect is linked to the previous one: establishing a general theory of emotions requires having comprehended all the uses of emotions and other words related to them in all the contexts where these terms can be used. In this regard, Goldstein, and Spence before him (see section 1.2 of this chapter for more details), is aware of the importance of determining the lexicon used and has recourse to the criteria of verifiability and significance as a final test to establish the suitability of the words applied to describe or identify the events studied.

Another issue faced by the contextualist theories of emotions is similar to that encountered in the behaviourist theories of emotions; they focus on how we communicate our emotions to others, putting aside the issue of determining the nature of emotions. Again, this might not necessarily be a limitation since those theories focus intentionally on the manifestation of emotions in a specific context. However, this determines that both behaviourist and contextualist theories of emotions cannot be considered as comprehensive theories because they only target certain aspects of emotions.

1.7 Summary

In my analysis of the classical theories of emotions, I used the adjective 'classical' to refer to the fact that the group of theories examined here have contributed to lay the foundations of the study of emotions in philosophy. I propose a summary table below (table 2) which identifies the key aspects and limitations of those theories.

TABLE 2- Main theories of emotions, their features and their limitations

Theory	Key aspects	Limitations
Cognitive Theories	• Evaluative judgment(s) are the basic element of emotions. • The contents of these judgments constitute the intention of emotions. • Feelings and emotions are two different things, but emotions are expressed through feelings.	• Cannot explain automatic reactions since they do not involve a judgment. • Difficulties in explaining how it is possible for human infants and non-human animals to have emotions.
Feeling Theories	• Emotions and feelings are the same things. • Mental states, such as judgments, are not a constitutive element of emotions.	• Feelings as emotions cannot explain the difference in emotional reactions when we are in front of the same target. • Long-lasting emotions do not constantly physically arouse the body.
Evolutionary theories	• Evolution shapes the development of emotions. • Emotions are superordinate programmes whose function is to coordinate the activities of the mind and body with the purpose of increasing the level of fitness and adaption of an organism.	• There are no basic emotions because emotions vary depending on language and culture. • In everyday life, an emotion rarely occurs in a pure form, therefore it is not possible to sharply divide them and identify which are basic.
Behaviourist theories	• What we can know about emotions is only the aspects that we can directly observe. • Emotions can be explained as the result of learning, conditioning adaption and inhibition. • These elements determine the development of patterns (models) of behaviour which guide the understanding of emotions.	• Problems to define patterns of behaviour since culture and environment have an influence in their development. • They focus on how emotions appear and do not clarify their physiological and psychological features.
Contextualist theories	• Emotions and other related terms can be understood only in relation to the context in which they have been used. • To communicate emotions efficiently, people must decide – make public– the criteria to use the words composing the language.	• Difficulties to create a definition of emotions that can be applied to several contexts. • Issues in determining the different uses of emotions that can be made in different contexts. • They focus on how emotions appear and do not clarify their physiological and psychological features.

The classical theories of emotions do not all tackle the problem of emotions from the same angle. In fact, the classical cognitive and feeling theories of emotions aim to determine how emotions arise and the role played by cognitions (evaluative judgments or appraisal) and feelings as constitutive of emotions. The classical evolutionary theories focus on the origin

of emotions as an instrument which, shaped by evolution, serves to increase the level of fitness and adaptation of an organism. The classical behaviourist theories of emotions study the directly observable side of emotions: behaviours that are determined by the arousal of emotions. Finally, the contextualist theories analyse the relationship between the emotions felt and the language used to describe them.

As seen throughout this chapter, the fact that those classical theories concentrate exclusively on certain issues related to the understanding of what emotions are, their function and arousal, leads to various issues. From this compartmentalised study of emotions emerges the need for a more comprehensive theory of emotion in philosophy which borrows methodology and, in certain cases even findings, from other disciplines to develop an account of 'emotion' that can be applied to the study of other issues.

The first two types of theories of emotions examined in this chapter, the cognitive and the feeling theories, will be further explored in the first part of my thesis. The remaining classical theories will also have their place and their core of ideas will be outlined as part of the cognitive and feeling theories of emotions I selected. My choice will allow me to determine how emotions are depicted in those theories as well as to argue that the use of a hybrid theory in which both cognitions and physical changes are recognised as determinant aspects of emotions constitutes the best way to achieve a comprehensive understanding of emotions.

Chapter II

Two rebel cognitive theories of emotions

2.1 Introduction

In chapter I, I presented several classical theories of emotions; I will now consider two of these in more depth: one elaborated by Aristotle and the other by Spinoza. Throughout this chapter, I will employ the terms 'emotions' and 'passions' as equivalents to the Greek terms '*páthi*' ('*πάθη*') used by Aristotle and '*affectum*' adopted by Spinoza.

I label Aristotle and Spinoza *rebel cognitivists* because, despite their work being used as a prototype for the cognitive theories of emotions, the two philosophers seem to acknowledge that both cognition and physical changes have an active role to play in the experience of emotions. Reference to their work demonstrates of how philosophy has long questioned the nature of emotions, resulting in interesting considerations that are still debated nowadays. Take, for instance, the issue of the rationality of emotions or the question of how emotions arise: both were addressed by Aristotle and Spinoza centuries ago. Yet, such issues are still a matter of debate today, both in philosophy and in empirical science, with advances in the latter field supporting some of the hypotheses first put forward by the two Philosophers.

As outlined in chapter I, the classical cognitive theories of emotions fail to explain in a persuasive manner how human infants and non-human animals can experience emotions, and fail to reply to the fear of flying challenge. These theoretical downsides are due to these theories' insistence that evaluative judgments are the only determinants of emotions. Despite these limitations, the classical cognitive theories of emotions make a very interesting

contribution to the debate about the role judgments play in emotions. Both Aristotle and Spinoza are frequently categorised as cognitive theorists due to their view that judgment is one of the key components of emotions. Nevertheless, a close study reveals that both Philosophers interpret somatic changes as a component of emotions. Moreover, both Aristotle's and Spinoza's explanation of how emotions operate introduce elements that do not match the model proposed in the classical cognitive theories of emotions. In my view, these elements are of capital importance to enhance our understanding of emotions from a philosophical perspective and fit nicely within the current debate on emotions in fields other than philosophy.

2.2 Aristotle: judgments and emotions

I will begin by reconstructing Aristotle's theory of emotions through an analysis of those fragments where the philosopher addresses the topic of emotions. Amongst those, I will underline the specific quotes at the probable root of the misleading interpretation that Aristotle as an advocate of the classical cognitive theories of emotions.

There are three possible reasons explaining the misinterpretation of Aristotle's theory of emotions. The first one relies on the division of Aristotle's work into exoteric and esoteric writings. The exoteric material was written for a large public that is not specialised in philosophy; therefore, the language used is less technical and more elegant. The esoteric writings were used by Aristotle as he taught: they are notes which were never reformulated or organised with a view to publication (Barnes, 1995: 12). In contrast to the exoteric part, of which only fragments remain, Aristotle's esoteric writings reached the modern times almost in their entirety. One of the reasons for the misreading of Aristotle may consist in the fact that the esoteric writings are notes written by the philosopher; those notes contain the development of Aristotle's philosophy, and as for all notes, the ideas they contain are not

always presented in the correct order or sufficiently explained. In some sections, ideas that had been developed previously take another shape or are even dismissed (Barnes, 1995: 14-16).-

The second reason for the misinterpretation of Aristotle's work is that his notes are not dated, and the only references regarding time are linked to historical events (Barnes, 1995: 18): consequently, we cannot be certain of the order in which his ideas arose or, even worse, which ones are definitive. Since Aristotle's esoteric writings consist for the most part of undated notes, it can be quite difficult for a researcher of emotions who is not an expert in Aristotle's philosophy to fully understand the thoughts behind those notes. The third reason is connected to the first one: Aristotle never dedicated an entire piece of work to emotions, but instead studied this subject as part of larger topics of investigation. For example, *The Art of Rhetoric* focuses on rhetoric, *The Nicomachean Ethics* on ethics. Therefore, determining Aristotle's theory entails analysing and construing all the passages in which he refers to emotions, all the while keeping in mind that he considers emotions as an ancillary subject and that the fragments in which emotions are investigated are notes used for teaching purposes.

2.2.1 The role of judgments in *The Art of Rhetoric*

My reconstruction of Aristotle's view of emotions will start with *The Art of Rhetoric* and the passages in which he identifies the connection existing between judgments and emotions. In this book, Aristotle's focus is on the manner in which rhetoric operates; therefore, he does not offer a complete theory of emotions as the issue of emotions is treated as ancillary to the main topic. However, the analysis of the emotions Aristotle offers in *The Art of Rhetoric* is sufficient to delineate a pattern which, albeit not present in his study of each emotion, will constitute the basis for my reconstruction of his overall view on the subject.

In *The Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle enquires on how individuals can discuss statements and defend themselves against the verbal attacks of others. Mastering this skill requires the ability to persuade people (Aristotle, 1926: Rh. 1355b17-20); Aristotle labels rhetoric "the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever" (Aristotle, 1926: Rh. 1355b28-30). He distinguishes (1926: Rh. 1356a1-23) between three types of persuasion associated with the verbal language: ethical appeal, logical appeal and emotional appeal. The first type, ethical appeal, consists in increasing the value of the content of one's speech by character and reputation; the persuasion will emanate from the status of the person delivering the speech, and not from agreement on the arguments presented or the contents of the speech. With logical appeal, persuasion is obtained through a speech appearing rational and true to the listener. The last type, emotional appeal, refers to putting the audience in a certain state of mind, i.e. playing with the emotions and the personality of the individuals in the audience to make them more vulnerable to the acceptance of specific ideas. The example below will assist in explaining the differences between Aristotle's three types of persuasion. A doctor wishes to convince a patient to undergo an experimental treatment that may have harmful, or even fatal side effects in some cases. Following Aristotle's categorisation, in order to be successful, the physician must: a) rely on their reputation and social status; b) refer to scientific research and show that the positive results of the treatment outweigh potential negative side effects; c) use to their advantage the patient's desire to heal and live a normal life.

Given that the orator may provoke emotions in the audience and use this to persuade the listeners, the orator must be able to understand emotions, in particular what causes them and how they arise (Aristotle, 1926: Rh.1356a28-29). Aristotle chooses anger to illustrate the importance of discerning how emotions are elicited. As the translation of the passage in which he addresses the issue is controversial, both the Greek and the English versions are

provided below. The quotation will be followed by an explanation regarding the use of the term ‘state of mind’ as one of the three elements that constitutes emotions.

> In Greek:
> Εστι δὲ τὰ πάθη, δι᾽ ὅσα μεταβάλλοντες διαφέρουσι πρὸς τὰς κρίσεις, οἷς ἕπεται λύπη καὶ ἡδονή, οἷον ὀργὴ ἔλεος φόβος καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα, 9καὶ τὰ τούτοις ἐναντία. δεῖ δὲ διαιρεῖν τὰ περὶ ἕκαστον εἰς τρία· λέγω δ᾽ οἷον περὶ ὀργῆς, πῶς τε διακείμενοι ὀργίλοι εἰσί, καὶ τίσιν εἰώθασιν ὀργίζεσθαι, καὶ ἐπὶ ποίοις· εἰ γὰρ τὸ μὲν ἓν ἢ τὰ δύο ἔχοιμεν τούτων, ἅπαντα δὲ μή, ἀδύνατον ἂν εἴη τὴν ὀργὴν ἐμποιεῖν· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων. ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν προειρημένων διεγράψαμεν τὰς προτάσεις, οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ τούτων ποιήσωμεν καὶ διέλωμεν τὸν εἰρημένον τρόπον (Aristotle, 2014: Rh. 1378a24-30).Aristotle, 2014 #315}
>
> Translation into English:
> The emotions are all those affections [feelings] which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgments, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain; such are anger, pity, fear, and all similar emotions and their contraries. And each of them must be divided under three heads; for instance, in regard to anger, the state of mind which makes men angry, the persons with whom they are usually angry, and the occasions which give rise to anger. For if we knew one or even two of these heads, but not all three, it would be impossible to arouse that emotion. The same applies to the rest (Aristotle, 1996: Rh. 1378a24-30).Aristotle

In the quoted passage, Aristotle makes use of ‘*diákeimai*’ (‘*διάκειμαι*’) to designate one of the three conditions that must take place to experience an emotion; the literal translation of the term would be ‘how they have’, but the word is generally its translated as ‘to be in a certain state’ or ‘to be disposed’. Given that, in the English version of Aristotle’s work, the Greek term ‘*hexis*’ (‘*ἕξις*’) is also used to indicate a disposition, ‘*diákeimai*’ will be translated as ‘state of mind’ in the following pages. The benefit of this choice is to avoid confusion with the concept of ‘disposition’ as equivalent of ‘*hexis*’, which indicates a continuous or habitual condition (person’s character) (Kennedy, [1997] 2007: 118). However, it is worth mentioning that while ‘state of mind’ in reference to Aristotle’s philosophy designates the overall psychological status of an individual at a certain time that makes them disposed to feel a specific emotion, the more contemporary philosophy uses the same term to indicate a specific belief or a desire.

Aristotle maintains that an emotion occurs when three conditions are satisfied: a) the person is in a suitable state of mind to experience the emotion; b) there is a stimulus of a certain type to generate the emotion; c) there is an object, i.e. an external event of the

appropriate kind for the emotion to arise (Power and Dalgleish, 2007: 35). It is to be noted that Aristotle uses the words 'stimulus' and 'object' in an unusual way. His use of 'stimulus' indicates a mental state, and not an external event as is traditionally the case. The concept of 'object' is adopted to designate an external event whereas it usually indicates an internal mental state (Power and Dalgleish, 2007: 35).

Aristotle then applies the three conditions to the example of anger:

> Let us then define anger as a longing, accompanied by pain, for a real or apparent revenge for a real or apparent slight, affecting a man himself or one of his friends, when such a slight is undeserved. If this definition is correct, the angry man must always be angry with a particular individual (for instance, with Cleon, but not with men generally), and because this individual has done, or was on the point of doing, something against him or one of his friends; and lastly, anger is always accompanied by a certain pleasure, due to the hope of revenge to come (Aristotle, 1926: Rh. 1378a34-1378b4).

In Aristotle's view, anger is an emotion experienced when a person in a particular state of mind makes a judgment about someone such as: this person wants to hurt my best friend. The judgment is directed at a specific target; for instance, in this case the target is Cleon and not people in general. When simultaneous with a specific state of mind, this judgment determines the arousal of anger. The state of mind Aristotle refers to seems to be the result of previous emotions and experiences felt by a person, both influencing the emotions to be felt at a later stage.

The hypothesis that the concept of state of mind can be interpreted as referring to previous emotional experiences finds support in Aristotle's assertion that emotions can also influence the formulation of a judgment:

> For it does not seem the same according as men love or hate, are wrathful or mild, but things appear altogether different, or different in degree; for when a man loves one on whom he is passing judgment, he either thinks that the accused has committed no wrong at all or that his offence is trifling; but if he hates him, the reverse is the case. And if a man desires anything and has good hopes of getting it, if what is to come is pleasant, it seems to him that it is sure to come to pass and will be good; but if a man is unemotional or in a bad humour, it is quite the reverse (Aristotle, 2008: *Rh.* 1377b30-1378a4).

Aristotle seems to postulate that *previous emotions* affect the formulation of judgments: loving someone who is accused of a terrible action will prompt a person to find justification

for their behaviour; on the contrary, one will be prone to judge a particularly disliked person guilty of the same offence. In the passage above, Aristotle does not use the expression 'state of mind' as he does in other quoted passages. However, once all passages are combined and interpreted as part of a comprehensive description of emotions, it is plausible to assume that Aristotle's state of mind refers, in fact, to previous emotions and their influence on our judgments for certain targets. Previous emotions influence our future judgment on certain targets and, in turn, have an impact on our future emotions.

2.2.2 The sensitive faculty: a close look

I discussed several passages of *The Art of Rhetoric* with the aim of determining the role Aristotle ascribes to judgments in reference to emotions. Those passages are exactly those generally used to reinforce the view that Aristotle is a supporter of the cognitive theories of emotions. As debated, Aristotle believes judgments are linked to emotions in two ways: a) a change of judgment is caused by an emotion; b) a change of judgment is constitutive of emotions (Leighton, 1982: 210). Nevertheless, to Aristotle, the important role of judgments is paralleled by that of physical changes; this issue will be tackled here by referring to the role of the soul and the movement for the arousal of emotions.

The following is a preliminary definition of soul as given by Aristotle in *De Anima*:

> Every natural body, then, that partakes of life would be a substance, and a substance in the way that a composite is. But since the natural body is still a body of the kind in question, that, of course, which has life, the soul would not be a body. […] It must then be the case that soul is substance as the form of a natural body which potentially has life, and since this substance is actuality, soul will be the actuality of such a body (Aristotle, 1986: De an. 412a17-26).

Aristotle asserts that the soul is the form of a natural body that can potentially be alive: in this case, the soul is substance because it makes the body alive. The soul is what makes the body alive and only when the body is alive is it a body, because it achieves its actuality. Thus, for Aristotle, the body and the soul are strictly connected because a body cannot

function (be alive) unless a soul inhabits it.

According to Aristotle, the soul of human animals has three faculties: vegetative, sensitive (or appetitive) and rational (Aristotle, 2005: Eth. Nic. 1102a33-1103a3). The vegetative faculty belongs to both plants and animals (human animals and non-human animals); it is the cause of growth and nourishment and is the most general faculty because all creatures have life in virtue of this faculty. The sensitive faculty belongs to all animals (human animals and non-human animals) and is the cause of perception, movement and desire. The rational faculty, which comprises of cognition and understanding, only belongs to human animals. Aristotle asserts that both the vegetative and sensitive faculties are irrational; the sensitive faculty contains, in a sense, a rational character because it can obey reason. For instance, in the case of a wise person, the sensitive faculty is directed to objects recognised by the majority as good because the sensitive faculty is in harmony with what the rational faculty believes to be best. Aristotle sometimes describes the soul as a set of capacities (nutrition, sense-perception and thought); the use of that term in reference to activities of the soul implies that capacities are not a conglomeration but indeed a unity working together. For instance, the capacity of nutrition can operate without sense-perception and thought, but the reverse is not the case (Sorabji, 1974: 64).

I will now focus on the sensitive part of the soul to determine the importance of somatic changes as constitutive of emotions. The sensitive faculty is responsible for perception, movement and desire. Perception, says Aristotle, arises when an animal has been moved and affected (Aristotle, 1986: De an. 416b19-21); this ability is what characterises all animals (the term here refers to both human animals and non-human animals). Amongst all senses, touch is the most common: animals, in order to qualify as animals, must at least possess this sense (Aristotle, 1986: De an. 413b6-9). To explain animal motion, Aristotle uses the example of the motion of the heavens and postulates that a thing can move because it receives

movement from another object. Therefore, the heavens can move and neatly orbit in their axes because they receive movement from an external source. This source, the first motion or eternal mover, does not itself move as this would induce an infinite regress, but does impart movement to the heavens (Aristotle, 1978: De motu an. 698a8-18). Animals, as well as the heavens, move because they are moved by something. Aristotle explains the source of this movement as follows:

> Hence whatever we do without calculating, we do quickly. For whenever a creature is actually using sense–perception or *phantasia* or thought towards the thing–for–the sake–of–which, he does at once what he desires. For the activity of the desire takes the place of questioning or thinking. 'I have to drink', says appetite. 'Here's drink', say sense–perception or *phantasia* or thought. At once he drinks. This, then is the way that animals are impelled to move and act: the proximate reason to the movement is desire, and this comes to be either through sense–perception or through *phantasia* or thought. With creatures that desire to act, it is sometimes from appetite or spiritedness and sometimes from [desire or] wish that they make or act (Aristotle, 1978: De motu an. 701a29-38).

It is the desire or appetite that makes creatures move. In *De Motu Animalium,* Aristotle uses expressions such as 'creatures' and 'animals' to designate a general group comprising of what is commonly called human animals and non-humans animals. Desire is the reason we move; it is to us what the first motion is to the heavens. In the passage above, desire comes first as it is what moves us, then comes sense perception, '*phantasia*' or imagination, which is the ability to produce mental images that derive from perception. Finally, thoughts find a way of making us move if we think that following our desire is going to result in a good outcome for us. Thus, Aristotle seems to deny that the soul is the subject of affections; the soul is the *terminus* or the origin of the passions taking place in the body and, as a result, passions arise when certain body parts are subjected to local motion or alteration (Corcilius and Gregoric, 2013: 55).

Desire is always directed at what produces pleasure in us. Aristotle identifies emotions as "all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgment, and also are attended by pain or pleasure" (Aristotle, 1926: Rh. 1378a24-27) and clarifies that "by emotion I mean anger, desire, and the like" (Aristotle, 1926: Rh. 1388b40-41). To him, desire can be an

emotion. It is however also true that Aristotle does not always include desire in the category of emotions (Rapp, 2005: 316), but his omission cannot eclipse the fact that his description of desire easily matches his concept of emotion as reconstructed in the previous section.

I will not delve deeper into Aristotle's distinctions on desires and emotions and will instead focus on the main topic at stake: advocating that, although Aristotle recognises the role of judgment as constitutive of emotions, he does not use that concept in the way the classical cognitive theories of emotions do. In fact, in the fragments where he describes emotions, Aristotle often references the ability of the sensitive faculty to determine the arousal of certain emotions. He equally refers to the fact that these emotions are influenced by the state of mind of the individuals feeling them. As asserted at the beginning of the chapter, Aristotle's state of mind refers not to cognition, but instead to feelings caused by previous emotions felt. The classical cognitive theories of emotions only refer to judgments as key aspects of emotions, while Aristotle seems to assert that both feelings (previous emotions) and judgments are crucial features of emotions.

2.3 Aristotle and the hybrid theory of emotions

Although it is plausible to assume that Aristotle's theory of emotions does not belong to the classical cognitive theories of emotions, several scholars often refer to his work as one of the first tenets of cognitive theories (Lazarus, 1993: 17; Power and Dalgleish, 2007: 36; Lyons, 1980b: 33; Roeckelein, 1998: 100; Cunningham, 2000: 109-110). In this section, I will review the concepts of state of mind and sensitive faculty as per Aristotle's writings in order to show that the philosopher's conception of emotions in fact lays the foundation for a hybrid theory of emotions.

Whilst it is true that Aristotle's use of judgment to explain emotions is similar to that found at the original core of classical cognitive theories, Aristotle also acknowledges the

active role of physical changes. This is in direct contradiction with the view held in classical cognitive theories of emotions: to him, feelings are not just the passive bodily manifestation of a phenomenon that takes place in the mind. Classifying Aristotle as a classical cognitivist would require dismissing the remainder of his theory (especially the sections describing animal motions and the role of the sensitive faculty) and emphasising only the more convenient section about judgment. This would, of course, result in a gross misinterpretation of his work. Moreover, Aristotle does not intend the judgments that compose emotions as something resulting from the ability to grasp and affirm a proposition. In fact, this ability seems to belong to the part of the soul that deals with scientific knowledge; in his work, this part of the soul belongs exclusively to human animals. As seen in the previous section, Aristotle asserts that the soul has three faculties, two of which (the vegetative and the sensitive faculty), belong to all animals (human and non-human). Passions (emotions and desires) prompt action and are caused by the sensitive faculty. Aristotle often postulates that emotions are caused by the sensitive faculty, which one can plausibly assume does not require the ability to grasp and affirm propositions as it belongs to all animals (human animals and non-human animals).

There is another major point of difference between Aristotle and classical cognitivists: the question of the importance of the state of mind as a feeling that arises due to previous emotions that are still present when we feel other emotions. In *The Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle does not specify in detail the nature and role of the state of mind as one of the three conditions that must be satisfied in order to experience an emotion. As this is one of the aspects I rely on to assert that Aristotle's theory of emotions is a hybrid, I will now propose a plausible explanation of the concept that marries well with his stance on emotions and the sensitive faculty.

While the original core of the classical cognitive theories of emotions exclusively

consider judgements as the key component of an emotion, Aristotle postulates that one must be in a given state of mind in order to feel an emotion; this entails a *feeling* preceding the arousal of a new emotion. Instead, the classical cognitive theories do not recognise the role of the state of mind as proposed by Aristotle. This is probably due to the fact that the classical cognitive theories of emotions consider feelings as a bodily manifestation of emotions; feelings are caused by an evaluative judgment, and are not a causal factor in the elicitation of emotions.

I interpret the state of mind as referring to previous emotions felt: the emotions to be experienced in the future are influenced by those felt in the present, and emotions felt in the present are influenced by those felt in the past. My interpretation of Aristotle can be exemplified in the following scenario. If I have been spending eight hours at work without a break with many customers complaining for no reason and cannot find a parking space for my car when I arrive home, I will be mad at my neighbour who keeps parking in my spot without any authorisation. After spending a day off having fun with my friends, the same situation will be experienced differently: I will still be unable to park because of my neighbour but might not be mad because I am still in a good mood thanks to the wonderful day I have had.

In this example, I am approaching the same judgment connected to an identical situation but the end result varies due to my initial state of mind being different. The state of mind is not something we can control; it is a tendency which brings us to see the world, to judge it, through specific spectacles. Following Aristotle's arguments, states of mind are feelings which put us in the position of reacting in a certain way in front of a target; their nature is caused by previous experiences and emotions. Aristotle's state of mind is nowadays often referred to as a mood. Moods are "transient episodes of feeling of or affect" the duration of which is longer than that of emotions (Watson and Vaidya, 2003: 351). Contrary to emotions,

moods are more diffuse and not directed towards a specific target; for instance, when an individual is in an anxious mood, their anxiety might relate to something as wide-ranging as their whole future, or be directed at what might happen in twenty years from now (Ekkekakis, 2012: 322). Thus, whereas the arousal of an emotion occurs instantaneously or shortly after its eliciting stimuli, moods take longer to arise (for instance, a person might get up in a bad mood due to an unpleasant experience on the previous day) and it is therefore more arduous to identify their cause. This meaning of mood might fit Aristotle's state of mind, but in the absence of a detailed explanation by Aristotle of what states of mind are, I would rather identify them with previous emotions. This fits Aristotle's description of emotions better.

The reference to the state of mind as moods or previously felt emotions constitutes the basis of the assertion I made at the beginning that Aristotle's theory can be seen as the foundation of a hybrid theory of emotions. In fact, Aristotle's writings offer a description of the emotional life of human and non-human animals that is far richer than the description offered by the classical cognitive theories of emotions. The latter present feelings only as the physiological changes that occur in our body due to the formulation of a judgment regarding a certain object. Feelings are considered passive and unable to contribute actively to the experience of emotions. As a result, our emotional life is divided into single moments that never interact with one another and completely vanish when a new emotion is felt. In the cognitive theories, feelings are a secondary aspect, something transitory that arises due to an evaluative judgment. The cognitive theories make no reference to the duration and aftereffects of those feelings; for this reason, I asserted that previous feelings disappear without leaving a trace. Instead, Aristotle presents our emotional life as something continuous that changes and takes different forms when a new or old emotion makes its way; what we felt previously affects what we will feel in the future.

2.3.1 A response to the challenges to classical cognitive theories of emotions

In this section, I will discuss how Aristotle's position about the state of mind and the role of the sensitive faculty opens the possibility of solving the two main problems at the core of the classical cognitive theories of emotions. Following this, I will refer to the role of tragedy for the education of human beings as an instance of the rational character of emotions.

The classical cognitive theories of emotions struggle to explain the emotions felt by human infants and non-human animals because their use of evaluative judgments implies that those feeling an emotion must master the ability to grasp and affirm propositions. In the case of Aristotle's theory of emotions, both categories are not excluded from the emotional life because having an emotion does not require the possession of this skill. In fact, following Aristotle's soul description, grasping and affirming propositions belongs to the rational faculty, which non-human animals do not possess and infants still need to develop. Consequently, if this skill belongs exclusively to the rational faculty, it is not indispensable to feeling an emotion. Indeed, the arousal of emotions does not result from the rational faculty, but from the sensitive faculty that allows us to perceive and interact with the target of our emotions. This does not mean to deny the role of judgments as one of the elements of emotions but, on the contrary, to assert that those judgments do not require a language to be formulated, but rather a fit body able to perceive objects and determine how to interact with them.

The other issue faced by the classical cognitive theories of emotions is the fear of flying argument described in chapter I: where the fear persists despite knowledge that airplanes are one of the safest means of transportation, Aristotle would most likely retort the person is unreasonable because their sensitive faculty is not following the rational faculty. To confirm the validity of my supposition, I will refer to the two types of virtues Aristotle deems to belong to human beings: intellectual and moral virtues. Intellectual virtues are developed

through teaching, whereas moral virtues are caused by habituation and not by nature (Aristotle, 2009a: Eth. Nic.1103a13-18).

Moral virtues, says Aristotle, are a state of character through which we decide what is good or bad in reference to the passions we feel (Aristotle, 2009a: Eth. Nic.1105b25-29). This state of character is concerned with the choice of what is good, and for Aristotle this relies on determining what the right mean is, that is the middle in between two vices: excess and deficiency (Aristotle, 2009a: Eth. Nic.1106b36-1107a8). For Aristotle, moral virtues concern both passions (emotions and desires) and actions; in both cases, one must determine the middle between excess and defect in order to act rightfully. Take, for instance, anger: the right mean is good temper, or patience. Individuals at the extreme of the *spectrum* are either irascible or unirascible (Aristotle, 2009a: Eth. Nic. 1108a4-9). Finding the right middle requires determining who or what the target of our emotion is, the extent of our rage, the right motive and the best time and way of expressing it (Aristotle, 2009a: Eth. Nic. 1108a 4-9). Aristotle asserts that practical and wise people are able to choose the right mean between excess and defect; this virtue enables them to deliberate what is good and beneficial for them and their life as a whole (Aristotle, 2009a: Eth. Nic. 1140a 24-29). This virtue does not belong to children and non-human animals who can act voluntarily but do not have the means to determine what is good (Aristotle, 2009a: Eth. Nic.1111b6-9); children have not yet acquired the ability to choose, while non-human animals simply do not possess this ability as they lack any rational faculty. Consequently, for Aristotle, the sensitive faculty must be educated in order to feel emotions as well as desire for certain targets; the sensitive faculty is ductile and can be shaped and educated through our experiences. If we always choose what is good, our sensitive faculty will be habituated to feel that this is good (Aristotle, 2011: Eth. Eud. 1206b7-28).

Aristotle believes that tragedy can have a role in the education of our sensitive faculty

because, from the moment we were born, we learn through imitation or representation (Aristotle, 1995: Poet. 1448b5-9). In the case of poetry, the objects of imitation are individuals who impersonate either a lower or a higher level of morality (Aristotle, 1995: Poet. 1448a1-5). The former is the subject of comedy, while both epic and tragedy focus on the latter.

The peculiarity of tragedy lies in that its *endeavours* always take place over the course of twenty-four hours (Aristotle, 1995: Poet. 1449b10-15). It also takes the shape of complete actions which, narrated in an adorned language, arouse pity and fear in the audience and cause purgation or cleansing ('*catharsis*' '*κάθαρσις*') of these emotions (Aristotle, 1995: Poet. 1449b20-31). The process of *catharsis* requires that tragedy tells the actions of individuals who have a change in fortune from good to bad, which is not caused by a vice but instead due to errors or frailty; only in that case will pity (caused by the undeserved misfortune) and fear (aroused by the fact that misfortune can strike all) be purged or cleansed (Aristotle, 1994: Poet. 1453a2-23).

According to Aristotle, during the process of *catharsis* both pity and fear aroused by the tragedy generate a kind of pleasure in the audience (Aristotle, 1994: Poet. 1453b7-11). The connection between pity, fear, *catharsis* and pleasure in Aristotle's tragedy is a much debated subject. Maesh Ananth asserts that the connection can be interpreted in three different ways. He calls the first interpretation 'purgation'; tragedy promotes the dismissal of unhealthy emotions or pathological conditions. Just like the ill patient is given micro doses of what makes them sick to promote their cure, the exposition to tragedy causes the liberation from unhealthy emotions leading to a psychological relief that is interpreted as pleasure (Ananth, 2014:3). The second one is called 'purification': the catharsis origins a cleaning of pity and fear, causing their modification; this process leads to a condition of pleasure (Ananth, 2014:3). Thus, in the case of 'purgation' the unhealthy versions of pity and fear

disappear, while in the case of 'purification' they are modified, leading those emotions to be expressed in the right way. The last interpretation is 'the cognitive stimulation or clarification'; the catharsis leads to a better understanding of both the plot and the characters' actions and of the features contradistinguishing the human condition; in this case the pleasure is double, both tragic and cognitive, and it is aroused by the better understanding of the tragedy (Ananth, 2014:3).

Ananth proposes another, cognitive interpretation of catharsis, which takes in to consideration how, according to Aristotle, this experience is lived only by educated citizens. Through imagination, educated citizens formulate evaluative judgements about the characters and their vicissitudes. Those evaluations arouse both pity and fear in them, while pleasure is caused by the fact that they correctly judged both the characters and their circumstances (Ananth, 2014:28).

Ananth's account of catharsis also considers how this experience triggers emotions of sympathy towards the characters, as well as the apprehension that same misfortune might one day hit them (Ananth, 2014:10). Through the use of instruments such as the plot, the melody and the characters, tragedy has the power to evoke emotions in the audience. As a result of this emotional engagement, the audience creates or transforms their habits of feeling pity and fear towards the right targets, at the right time and in the right manner (Curzer, 2012:347).

To do so, we must be capable of putting ourselves in the shoes of the characters; this is what makes possible the process of imitation that Aristotle has in mind and that is fundamental to learning new behaviour. What I roughly described as *to put ourselves in the shoes of other people* can be coined with a more appropriate term: empathy (Boal [1976] 2008: 84; Barry [1995]2002; 21-22). Aristotle never uses the word to indicate why it is possible for the audience to learn from the tragedy, but he has something similar in mind

when he asserts that people can learn through representation.

For example, the character of Medea described by Euripides in his tragedy represents a woman who fights for revenge; she has been betrayed and abandoned by her husband Jason who decided to marry another woman. Blinded by revenge, Medea kills the children she had with Jason as well as his future wife. The character of Medea portrays a woman who, driven by pain and neglect, commits despicable actions which, in many ways, differ from the behaviour a wise person would exhibit. At the same time, Medea gives us an opportunity to familiarise ourselves with her pain and the suffering that her reaction to pain has caused to her and all those around her. If we, as viewers, experienced the same situation, we would be able to find a better way to react than killing our own children as Medea did.

In this case, tragedy is not only a fundamental instance of the fact that the sensitive faculty is what makes us move and that it can be educated and directed to something that the majority will consider as good. Tragedy also opens up to the assumption that emotions are something rational which can provide support when we decide how to act or what to choose; the topic of the rationality of emotions will be partially addressed through Spinoza's theory and it will come back again in chapters III and IV.

2.4 Spinoza and the geometrical study of emotions

As asserted previously, Aristotle is considered as one of the first cognitive theorists of emotions because of his use of judgments in *The Art of Rhetoric*. Spinoza is another philosopher who makes assertions very similar to Aristotle's, although he did not receive the same level of attention from those interested in cognitive theories of emotions. In this section, I will review the key points of his theory of emotions and draw some similarities between his theory and Aristotle's. Spinoza's account of emotions is considered by some scholars as a *weak* cognitive theory because although judgments are important in his view,

they do not have a causal role in the emergence of emotions (Power and Dalgleish, 2007: 47). Other researchers believe that Spinoza "developed an early version of the cognitive theory of emotion" (Solomon, 2008: 7). Nevertheless, Spinoza's work, just like Aristotle's, never attributes to the concept of judgment the same meaning and role as the classical cognitive theories of emotions do.

Spinoza dedicates the third part of the *Ethics* (1677) to passions (emotions) and applies a geometrical method to study this topic. The Philosopher asserts that there are universal laws ruling the natural world. These rules are always precise and apply to the whole of nature, human animals included. Thus, it is feasible to understand and study human behaviours and emotions in the same way as it is possible to research lines, solids and planes because natural law has the same precision as geometry (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3pref).

Spinoza defines emotions as follows:

> By affect I mean the modifications of the body, whereby the active power of the said body is increased or diminished, aided or constrained, and also the ideas of such modifications (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3d3).

In this definition, Spinoza uses 'affect' to indicate the physical and mental changes that take place in our body, changes that can increase or decrease our capacities (physiological and mental power). An affect, for Spinoza, consists in a passage from a better to a worse (or *vice versa*) physiological and mental condition; therefore, the affect does not cause the change but constitutes the transition from one condition to another (Nadler, 2006: 201). Spinoza asserts that an affect can be caused by actions or passions (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3d3). With regards to actions, the cause of the affect relies entirely on the individual itself; the improvement of our condition is only due to our own resources and knowledge about what is good for us. Meanwhile, passions are physical and mental modifications that an individual undergoes or suffers due partially to the interaction with an external object (Nadler, 2006). Thus, passions are externally caused changes that lead to improvement or impairment;

instead, actions are improvements caused by our will and capacities and are always intended to increase and preserve our power (Nadler, 2006: 202).

2.4.1 Joy, sadness and desire

Spinoza asserts that there are three main groups of passions: joy, sadness and desire. I will determine what those passions are, why he considers them basic and what their relationship with the striving is.

According to the Philosopher, "each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being" (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p7p); that is, the effort (striving or '*conatus*') made by each individual is aimed at persevering their existence (Deleuze, [1970]1988: 21). Thus, the will of each person pushes them to use their capacities to increase their power and improve their condition. From Spinoza's thesis that we are moved by a striving derives the idea that our mind "avoids imagining those things that diminish or restrain its or the body's power" (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p9c). In more simple words, our minds, pushed by the striving, avoid imagining what could cause a decrease in our physical and mental abilities and when we imagine something that causes an impairment, our striving pushes us to avoid it (exclude their existence) to stop the damage caused.

Spinoza labels the striving that originates only in the mind 'will', and the striving caused by both the mind and the body 'appetite' (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p9s). Spinoza considers there is no difference between appetite and desire; however, only in the case of desire are the individuals conscious of their appetite. Therefore, "desire can be defined as appetite together with the consciousness of the appetite" (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p9s).

> From all of this, then, it is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p9s).

In this passage, Spinoza shows that it is not through a judgment that we establish that

something can be beneficial for us and therefore should be desired. On the contrary, we feel that something is good because we desire it; this desire will cause our judgment to justify the target as good. Here, Spinoza completely distorts the function of judgment as it appears in the classical cognitive theories of emotions: for the Philosopher, it is not the judgment about the value of a target that triggers a desire for it.

Having examined what desire is and how it connects with the striving, I will now determine what joy and sadness are. Spinoza introduces joy and sadness in the following words:

> We see, then, that the mind can undergo great changes, and pass now to a greater, now to a lesser perfection. These passions, indeed, explain to us the affects of joy and sadness. By joy, therefore, I shall understand in what follows that passion by which the mind passes to a great perfection. And by sadness, that passion by which it passes to a lesser perfection (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p11s).

Spinoza believes that passions are caused by the relation we have with external objects; the mental and physical affects caused by the passions can generate an increase or a decrease of our power. When we experience joy, our mind acquires more power; joy is the feeling of being enhanced by something external to us, and its affect in both the mind and the body is pleasure. Instead, when we experience sadness, the power of the mind is weakened; sadness is the feeling of being worsened by something external to us and its affect in both the mind and the body is pain (Nadler, 2006: 203). Sadness or joy or are basic emotions: all emotions derive from them or a variation of them (Nadler, 2006: 204). For instance, love and hatred are respectively joy and hatred, accompanied by the idea of an external cause (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p13s). Accordingly, when we love someone or something, our striving pushes us to preserve them and keep them close. On the contrary, when we hate someone or something, our striving pushes us to destroy and remove them (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p13schol).

There are cases, says Spinoza, where the power of passions can be stronger or weaker:

> That is why most men believe that we do freely only those things we have a weak inclination toward (because the appetite for these things can easily be reduced by the memory of another thing which we frequently recollect), but that we not at all do freely those things we seek by a strong affect, which cannot be calmed by the memory of another thing. But if they had not found by experience that we do many things we afterwards repent, and that often we see the better and follow the worse (viz. when we are torn by contrary affects), nothing would prevent them from believing that we all do things freely (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p2dem).

In this passage, Spinoza depicts those circumstances where passions are so strong that we cannot restrain or control them because our desire or striving towards specific targets can be more or less intense. Strong passions cannot be tempered by the mind, which is forced to undergo their affect without being able to exercise free will. Only moderate passions may be controlled as our mind can impose itself to them and resort to other memories that modulate the affects of the passions. For Spinoza, a confirmation of the validity of his theory resides in that individuals will often take actions they will regret; similarly, individuals may recognise a specific action would be beneficial or good for them and yet choose to act in the opposite way. He uses the case of a drunk person and a delirious individual who, while they speak, believe to be acting freely but are instead influenced by the affects of passions (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p2dem). The apparent freedom of both the drunk and the delirious individual is caused by the fact that they are conscious of acting. Yet, for the philosopher, being aware of an action does not entail knowing its causes (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E2p2dem). In the examples above, the individuals do not act because of the dictates of the mind; at the origin of these behaviours is what Spinoza defines as appetite, i.e. a desire we are not conscious of.

Spinoza asserts that the same affect can present itself several times during the course of our life. He postulates that we are 'affected with the same affect of joy or sadness from the image of a past or future thing as from the image of a present thing' (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p18def). With this, Spinoza means that when we are affected by the image (idea) of something, it is perceived as present (actual). This image can be recalled in our mind, and

therefore be present again, when associated with the image of past or future times. Thus, something is past or future when we have already been affected by it or will be in the future. The affects that arise from these images associated with past and present times are not constant, because the images are disturbed by other images until we reach a level of certainty about the outcome (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E3p18s1). For instance, to Spinoza, hope is an inconsistent joy caused by the image of something that belongs either to the future or the past, the outcome of which we doubt (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E1p18s2).

Spinoza's exposition of recurring affects justifies his take on the role of the images (or evaluative judgments) through which we represent the target of our emotions. Those images, although indispensable, are not the source of our passions but contribute to their elicitation. What causes the passions is the striving; shaped through desire, it pushes us to avoid or get closer to specific targets. The striving is rational as it dictates what should or should not be embraced with the aim of preservation. Nevertheless, the striving cannot be considered as pure cognition because it belongs to all creatures and operates through our body. In this case, it is the body that originates the striving; the cognition provides support for its realisation.

2.5 Spinoza is not a weak cognitivist

In the following section, I will further address the role of the striving and argue that Spinoza's theory of emotions does not belong to the classical cognitive theories. Although in *The Ethic* Spinoza uses a terminology very different to that adopted by Aristotle, both Philosophers recognise the fundamental role of physicial changes as a constituent of emotions. As seen in the previous section, Spinoza claims that passions are those affects that we undergo without the mind having any control. Based on this thesis, he argues that our striving pushes us towards pleasant, or moves us away from painful objects. We do not feel those objects are pleasant or painful due to a judgment on their value, quite the opposite: we

interpret the content of those objects as pleasant or painful because we feel in this way when relating to them. In this case, Spinoza is reversing the content of the core of the classical cognitive theories of emotions and therefore cannot be considered an advocate of these theories, be it only a weak one. In fact, for Spinoza emotions intended as modifications of our mind are cognitions of the physical changes that occur in our body caused by the interaction we have with an object.

Spinoza asserts that our ideas about objects are different modes of thinking compared to love, desire, etc. (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E1p31d) and this is confirmed as follows:

> There are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the word affects of the mind, unless there is in that same Individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking (Spinoza, [1677]1996: E2a3).

Cognitions and emotions are two different activities of the mind. However, emotions require the idea (or image) of the object that is the target of our emotion. Although the use of 'idea' resembles the concept of judgment as used in the classical cognitive theories of emotions, this resemblance is only apparent. Indeed, Spinoza affirms that not all the ideas about objects arouse affects, so even though emotions require ideas it is the striving that pushes us to feel attracted to or uninterested in certain objects, not the judgment about their value. The striving, as intended by Spinoza, is a force oriented to preserve our existence: it pushes us towards what feels pleasant and leads us away from those objects that are felt as painful.

If Spinoza's theory does not reduce emotions to a reasoning about an object, it is nonetheless true that it does not limit itself to considering emotions as physical changes (Brann, 2008 255). Thus, Spinoza finds a middle ground between the classical cognitive and feeling theories of emotions because he believes that the judgment (or idea) about an object alone cannot be the cause of an emotion. At the same time, he argues it is the striving that orients us to what increases our power and makes us avoid what causes its decrease. In light of those remarks regarding Spinoza's theory of emotions, I consider it reductive to assert

that he is a cognitive theorist of emotions. This is true in particular considering that, for him, passions are changes that affect us mentally and physically; to him, what we define as 'emotions' is our cognitive or mental representation of those changes.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented Aristotle's and Spinoza's theories of emotions, both of which are often considered as cognitive theories of emotions due to their claim that the only component of emotions are cognitions (under the form of judgment for Aristotle, and ideas or images of the mind for Spinoza). However, I have argued that both Spinoza and Aristotle recognise that cognition is not the only key element of emotions: the somatic components (sensitive faculty for Aristotle, and the striving for Spinoza) are also fundamental. The assertion that Aristotle's and Spinoza's theories of emotions are an early version of a hybrid theory will be further supported as my thesis unfolds: in chapter IV especially, I will compare the theories examined here and in the following chapters with the aim of identifying what differentiates emotions from other cognitive and physical events.

Although Aristotle's and Spinoza's theories of emotions present some limitations because they were developed at a time when very little was known about brain functions, they offer interesting suggestions regarding the role played by physical changes as an element of emotions. For those reasons, I considered Aristotle and Spinoza as two *rebel* cognitive theorists whose theories move towards a hybrid direction where cognitions and physical changes together are considered constitutive of the emotion. Both philosophers seem to agree that a mental representation of the object (an evaluative judgment) that is the target of our emotion is necessary. This representation may be only partial or fail to take into account all the qualities that distinguish that object with respect to others. What we feel for that target would not be possible without having first characterised its content, but this does not mean

that every judgment about an object will cause an emotion. Aristotle explains the arousal of emotions referring to the sensitive faculty, while Spinoza uses the striving.

Following Aristotle's reasoning, the sensitive faculty determines what we feel about specific targets; those feelings arise in us due to a process (education) through which the sensitive faculty becomes habituated to feel in a certain way about the target. Accordingly, the emotions we feel for a certain target can change over time due to experience which, directed by the faculty of reason, teaches us to move towards what is good and avoid what is bad with the aim of living a life of happiness. Instead, Spinoza believes that the striving, intended as a force that drives us to self-preservation, brings us close to what can increase our power (mental and physical abilities) and leads us to avoid what causes its decrease. Thus, joy and sadness are manifestations of the striving when oriented toward something pleasant (joy) that determines a growth of our power or something (unpleasant) that causes its decline.

Chapter III

Feeling theories of emotions: is there space for cognitions?

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will further investigate the role of somatic changes in the arousal of emotions and as a component of emotions. For that purpose, I will refer to the theories proposed by Lange and Damasio. My aim will be to identify the original core of feeling theories of emotions and how it has developed in the light of the most recent neurobiological breakthroughs.

Lange's theory, along with that developed by James as described in section 1.3, is often referred to as the James-Lange theory. Both theories share the assumption that feelings are the main component of emotions; 'feelings' stands for the perception of the physiological changes that occur in the body (Northoff, 2008: 502). Thus, in the case of an emotion, the bodily and behavioural responses triggered by the interaction we have with the target of our emotion take place before we consciously realise undergoing those changes (Lang, 1994: 212). However, the common ground shared by James and Lange does not imply that they both propose the same hypothesis. My discussion of Lange's theory will provide an understanding of the classical feeling theories of emotions as a reaction to the classical cognitive theories' assertion that feelings only arise due to an evaluative judgment about a target, and therefore have a secondary role. Moreover, the reference to Lange's methodology will be crucial to inform the discussion on the merits of a *hybrid* approach to the study of emotions. In his work, the observation of the physical symptoms of emotions are compared with the way popular culture describes the changes aroused by emotions. The novelty of

Lange's methodology is that, whereas on the one hand he believes that a change in the study of emotion is needed, on the other he does not shut off popular culture but acknowledges it on the basis that his science of emotions can objectively explain the features of emotions identified in popular culture. Therefore, his approach is hybrid in that it creates a continuity with the popular understanding of emotions.

Subsequently, I will consider the key points in Damasio's work that attempt to resolve some of the downsides of the classical feeling and cognitive theories of emotions and demonstrate how this results in a hybrid theory of emotions that finds its foundation in neurobiology and can be applied to subjects other than neuroscience and philosophy.

3.2 Lange's Newtonian revolution of emotions

I introduced the original core of the classical feeling theories of emotions in chapter I, and will now turn to them again, assessing the methodology and findings of Lange's theory of emotions and discussing their consequences. Lange and James's work concerning emotions was very much debated in psychological journals during the 1890s, and the two researchers' findings were often grouped under the label of James-Lange theory of emotions. Nevertheless, the literature available on the subject attributes more space and importance to James's theory than to Lange's. This is probably because neurobiology has proved some of the points in Lange's theory to be scientifically inaccurate (Wassmann, 2010: 974). Despite the fact that Lange has been obscured by James's colossal presence in the literature, his effort to propose a new methodology for the study of emotions is worth discussing.

Claudia Wassmann argues that there are at least four reasons to justify the importance of Lange's work. Firstly, his theory offers an alternative to the position held by psychologists (and also by those I have defined as classical cognitivists) that emotions are purely mental phenomena and that the physiological changes involved are a secondary aspect of emotions.

Secondly, Lange's attempt to give a neurophysiological explanation of the emotional symptoms of patients by observing them contributes to the history of biological psychiatry. Thirdly, Lange's ideas are closer to neurophysiology than James's work is; an illustration of this is Lange's speculation that emotions are caused by vascular changes occurring in the vasomotor muscles and his belief in the existence of a neuroanatomical centre that processes emotions. Fourthly, Lange's theory asserts that emotions involve several components, and this idea brings him closer to the contemporary componential theories of emotions (Wassmann, 2010: 975).

I will add two additional reasons to those advanced by Wassmann. Lange's methodology constitutes an effort to create an interdisciplinary work in which the popular culture – expressed in the shape of a figure of speech – occupies a prime place and, in some cases, finds a justification thanks to it vivid depiction of how emotions are physically expressed. The last reason is connected to the previous one: although Lange's work presents some limitations caused by the fact that, at the time, neurobiology was not as advanced as it is today (for instance, he does not specify which brain areas are responsible for the arousal of emotions and attributes all the physical changes to the vasomotor muscles), the multidisciplinary character of his method is a novelty increasingly present in the more contemporary debate about emotions (see, for example, the work of Damasio discussed in this chapter and that of Solomon, whose main ideas are unfolded in chapter IV).

Having argued the importance of Lange's theory in the literature of emotions, I will now identify why he deems it important to study the nature of emotions. In *The Emotions* (1886), Lange asserts that emotions are one of the most powerful forces in nature and play an important role in the life of human beings (Lange, 1922: 34). To Lange, the study of the nature and behaviour of emotions has been neglected by the literature, leading to a very superficial understanding of the phenomenon; this is in stark contradiction with the

important role emotions play in our lives (Lange, 1922: 34). In *The Emotions*, Lange does not plan to propose a complete representation of the physiology of emotions, let alone a review of the main points (Lange, 1922: 34). Instead, he is interested in emotions from a medical perspective: he wants to define and explain the relation between emotions and bodily conditions that are pathological in nature.

It became apparent to Lange from the early stages of his work that the task which he had set for himself of studying the effects of emotions on the body was impossible to accomplish (Lange, 1922: 34). Indeed, without a scientifically established definition of emotions to form the basis of his analysis, it would prove difficult to use the concept to describe certain phenomena (Lange, 1922: 35). For this reason, he decides to adopt a physiological method which, as clearly as possible, defines what manifestations should be catalogued as emotions, and therefore warrant further investigation Lange asserts that only physiological phenomena (such as sorrow, joy, fear, anger, etc.) are regarded as emotions; other phenomena (such as love, hate, scorn, admiration, etc.) are be labelled as passions, feelings or any other term deemed more appropriate (Lange, 1922: 35). Lange justifies the distinction between emotions and other phenomena such as passions and feelings by stating that the "latter is more complicated, and includes dissimilar disturbances of the mind so that disturbances in imagination and reflexion especially play a part in their origin. Emotions are, on the contrary, simple, single phenomena" (Lange, 1922: 36). Here, there is a slight difference in the use of the terms 'emotions', 'feelings' and 'passions', which should always be borne in mind to fully understand the meaning of Lange's theory. For Lange, 'emotions' are those manifestations that derive from one cause only: the body. Meanwhile, other phenomena are more complicated than emotions because their arousal relies upon several causes such as imagination and reflection. In the passage quoted, Lange does not specify the difference between passions and feelings and uses the terms interchangeably; this terminological

inaccuracy can be attributed to the fact that Lange's major goal is to separate emotions from other types of manifestations and that he wants to focus exclusively on the former.

Lange's need to justify the delimitation of his field of study is due to his intention to resolve the issue of the subjective character of emotions. Moreover, he uses the study of emotions as an opportunity to prove the veracity and accuracy of his scientific method (Lange, 1922: 39). Lange does not specify what the particular issues related to the subjectivity of emotions are; however, it is legitimate to believe that the term subjectivity refers to the fact that the full spectrum of cognitive and physical effects of emotions are perceived only by the person experiencing those changes. For this reason, the study of emotions has often been brushed aside; conducting an objective analysis proves difficult. An outside viewer who wants to document all the effects of emotions experienced by one person can never actually reach this result because some of those effects can only be experienced, and therefore recorded, by the person experiencing the emotion.

For Lange, the objective study of emotions is indeed possible where an appropriate method is used; he illustrates his proposed method with the example of colours (Lange, 1922: 37). Emotions and colours crystallise a common issue of subjectivity: before Newton, no objective study of colours had been possible because their only known property was the effect they have on a subject's experiences. There was no means of detaching the study of colours from this subjective dimension because the only knowledge available at the time was related to how colours present themselves to those who experience them. Newton's discovery of the objective quality of colours rendered possible the existence of a science of colours and the examination of their properties, thus moving away from focusing exclusively on the representation of colours as described by those who perceive them (Lange, 1922: 37). Lange calls for a similar revolution in the study of emotions: the analysis of their physiological characteristics will result in an objective study. The accuracy of this proposed

study will rely on the fact that only the observable manifestations of emotions (the effect they have on our body) will be taken in consideration.

3.2.1 Lange's chosen method

Lange believes that it is conceivable to formulate a science of emotions when we exclusively take into account the physical effects of emotions observable by an outside viewer. Thus, the subjective aspect of emotions, which requires the experience of the person feeling those emotions, is to be left out as the outside viewer cannot have a direct experience of those changes. The formulation of a science of emotions requires the use of a specific method designed by Lange with the purpose of achieving in the study of emotion the same result as Newton in the study of colours.

In this section, I will further develop my reconstruction of Lange's methodology and clarify the value and role it plays in his theory of emotions. Lange's method to elaborate a science of emotions will provide assistance in answering the following question: "what bodily manifestations accompany each of the affections?" (Lange, 1922: 38). To answer this question, Lange adopts a method that combines conscious observation of the physiological changes caused by the arousal of emotions in an individual with popular consciousness (popular culture), i.e. the figures of speech and verbal expressions first used by poets to describe emotions and which are now of common use (Lange, 1922: 39). Lange limits conscious observations to clinical observation, that is the observation and collection of all the physiological symptoms of emotions. The most instructive part, according to Lange, would be the analysis of those cases where the signs of emotions are so strong and persistent that they become pathological (Lange, 1922: 39). This part of his method is similar to that normally used in physiological studies, but a difference is that Lange wants to investigate only those emotions that can be easily spotted because they exhibit specific features. Those

observations of emotions would then be compared to the way specific emotions have been described in popular culture in order to determine whether there is a continuity between the manner in which science and popular culture describe emotions (Lange, 1922: 39).

Following Lange's argumentation as outlined in *The Emotions*, I will refer to his description of emotions and then propose a practical use of his method applied to the study of fear. Before proceeding, I will point out that whilst some of Lange's comments about fear may seem very naïve due to the very limited technological and neuroscientific knowledge available at the time he conducted his research, they are still worth mentioning as they constitute one of the first attempts to combine science with popular culture. It is from efforts like these that derive the multidisciplinary approaches to the study of emotions that are ever popular in today's literature.

Lange says:

> We have in every emotion as sure and tangible factors: (1) a cause - a sensory impression which usually is modified by memory or a previous associated image; and (2) an effect - namely, the above mentioned vaso-motor changes and consequent changes in bodily and mental functions […] The popular opinion seems to be that, as has been mentioned, the immediate outcome of a situation which arouses an emotion is a purely psychic one, that is, either a new power is generated in the mind, or a modification of the mental condition takes place; and furthermore, that this mental activity is the actual affection, the real pleasure, pain, etc., whereas the physical phenomena are merely secondary, always present, to be sure, but in themselves quite unessential (Lange, 1922: 64).

Lange divides emotions into two groups: emotions that cause a change in the vascular innervation and emotions that change the function of other nerves (Lange, 1922: 58). To him, both types of effects are caused by the perception (sensory impression) of an object whose content is modified by previous memories. According to popular opinion, says Lange, the effects caused by the arousal of emotions are purely psychological, that is, a positive or negative change related to the abilities of the mind. Meanwhile, the physical changes are considered as secondary or even unnecessary for the arousal of emotions.

The hypothesis offered by the popular opinion, says Lange, can be justified only if "(1) it explains the phenomena it is assumed to explain, and (2) it is necessary for the explanation

of these phenomena" (Lange, 1922: 64). Lange assumes that the hypothesis in question meets the first requirement, as a hypothesis should be considered fit to explain a phenomena for so long as experience does not prove the opposite (Lange, 1922: 64-65). He then moves on to the second criteria suggesting that, in order to explain emotions, we need not to refer to the increase or decrease of the mental activity as primary consequences of emotions. In fact:

> Take away the bodily symptoms from a frightened individual; let his pulse beat calmly, his look be firm, his colour normal, his movements quick and sure, speech strong, his thoughts clear; and what remains of his fear? (Lange, 1922: 66).

Here, Lange claims that emotions are characterised by the physical changes they cause. Thus, even though emotions have an impact on our mental abilities, those should be considered to be a consequence of the physical changes our body undergoes while we feel an emotion.

With his thesis, Lange wants to reverse the position held in popular culture and propose another hypothesis in which emotions are intended as physical changes elicited by the interaction we have with an object. I will now further explore Lange's hypothesis by referring to his explanation of fear. For him, it is possible to understand what fear is based on solely by examining the somatic changes caused when it is felt. He describes fright as an emotion similar to pain because both cause a paralysis effect on the voluntary motor apparatus and convulsive conditions of the constrictor muscles (Lange, 1922: 46). However, whilst pain involves convulsive spasms that happen only in particular sections of the body, in the case of fear the convulsive spasmodic condition of the muscles applies to all the muscles (Lange, 1922: 46). The physiological symptoms, says Lange, are reflected in some figures of speech often used to describe these two emotions; for example, a person is 'weighed down by' pain or 'paralysed' with fear (1922: 46). Moreover, in the case of fear, the convulsive contraction of the constrictor muscles causes a lack of blood and the skin can

become cold and pale (Lange, 1922: 47). Lange notes other distinctive symptoms, such as grey hair caused by the lack of blood in the skin, cold sweats which have not yet been explained, shivers and tremor originating in vascular convulsions and a deficiency in the blood supply. These phenomena are the source of expressions such as "hair turning white from fear, tremble for fear and cold sweat from fear" (Lange, 1922: 47).

For Lange, it is the physical changes that they cause which characterise emotions; although emotions might be caused by different factors, their physical effects can only be interjected or modified by other physiological changes (Lange, 1922: 66). In this regard, Lange uses the example of alcohol as illustrated by Jeppe, a character in the comedy *Jeppe and Berge* by Holdberg, to explain how the physical changes caused by emotions can, in turn, be modified or end only with the intervention of other physical changes (Lange, 1922: 66). Jeppe drinks due to his marital problems and the fear he has of his master; when he drinks brandy he feels "a sensation of warmth, levity and power, instead of his customary laxity and incompetence" (Lange, 1922: 66). The changes felt by Jeppe are due to the excitement of the vasomotor apparatus, the increase of the speed of the heart beat and the dilation of the capillaries; these changes make the brain more relaxed and more prone to think about something pleasant (Lange, 1922: 67). Jeppe's consumption of alcohol has physical effects on his body which, in turn, result in a cognitive change; the stimulation of the vasomotor apparatus caused by the brandy, says Lange, gives to Jeppe a feeling of warmth, levity and power (Lange, 1922: 67). Thus, Jeppe's case is an instance of the fact that the physical changes are affecting and dictating the cognitive changes, and not *vice versa.*

This example provides Lange with the opportunity to challenge the popular opinion about emotions and, at the same time, to argue that a science of emotions, i.e. an objective study, does not need to refer to the changes that happen in the mind. In fact, Lange proposes that

what happens to our cognitive capacities while we feel an emotion is subjective and can be registered only by the person experiencing it. Due to its subjective character, Lange believes that this aspect of emotions is not worth exploring, and importance should instead be placed in the study of the physiological changes involved.

Aware of the criticism his ideas may face, Lange specifies that as his method consists in an analysis of emotions from a physical perspective and in light of the way emotions are depicted in figures of speech, the connection between emotions and mental aspects is not relevant to his work (Lange, 1922: 79), probably because the aspects in question belong to the subjective feature of emotions. In fact, Lange asserts that, from a physiological point of view, there is no difference between emotions caused by a mental disturbance and a physical disturbance because both start with the stimulation of the vasomotor centres; the only difference between the two causes is the path followed by the impulse to reach the centre (Lange, 1922: 79).

Although Lange sees emotions as physiological changes, he believes that our emotional responses to certain stimuli can be modified through a process of education whose purpose is to increase our self-control and lead to the suppression of those (natural) physical responses that do not fit into established social conditions. This process of changes in behaviour takes place over a long time, sometimes years, and is transmitted to posterity by inheritance (Lange, 1922: 82). The idea that emotions are altered by the activity of the mind is similar to what Aristotle and Spinoza present in their theories explained in the previous chapter. It is a fascinating idea for anyone attempting to clearly distinguish the cognitive theories of emotions and the feeling theories of emotions that Aristotle, Spinoza and Lange, despite adopting a different type of lexicon, agree on the essential role of the mind: a) it provides a representation of the qualities of the object which constitutes the target of an emotion; b) the mind can lead in time to a process of conditioning which results in a change

in the emotional outcome of the representation of specific targets. In this specific case, Lange, who is regarded as a feeling theorist, postulates that cognitive activities and social context can influence how our body reacts to certain stimuli. This aspect of his theory might appear in contrast with his saying that emotions are not caused by memory or association of ideas, but the two hypotheses are not effectively contradictory. Lange never denies that the arousal of emotions involves the work of the mind, but he also asserts that emotions are distinguished by physical changes which can be observed and catalogued by his method. Thus, Lange's disregard for the mind's role is rooted in the fact that the mind's functions fall into the domain of subjectivity. This is the very aspect he feels the science of emotions should depart from if it is to succeed in its quest to become objective.

3.2.2 Is Lange's theory a classical feeling theory of emotions?

In this section, I will further clarify the differences between James's and Lange's theory, and present Cannon's critique of both. Finally, I will argue that Lange's theory is important because it exemplifies a multidisciplinary approach. Both Lange and James agree that what we usually define as an emotion is a mental representation of bodily changes. Without those physical changes, there would be no emotions. However, the two authors offer different hypotheses regarding how those physical effects take place. Walter B. Cannon (1871-1945), author of the article *The James-Lange Theory of Emotions: a Critical Examination and an Alternative Theory* (1927), develops one of the most interesting and complete analyses of both James's and Lange's work. According to Cannon's reconstruction, James believes that emotions are, for the most part, caused by sensations and viscera, while Lange attributes the entire cause to sensations deriving from the circulatory system (Cannon, 1927: 109). Cannon argues that both James and Lange identify incorrect areas responsible for the arousal of emotions because, when the visceral areas considered responsible for emotions are

artificially stimulated, they do not cause the arousal of emotions in the subjects tested (Cannon, 1927: 113). Cannon verifies this hypothesis by referring to several empirical studies involving the administration of adrenaline directly into the blood stream and under skin of some subjects. Those studies show that, although the subjects underwent changes James and Lange described as typical of strong emotions, they did not experience any specific emotion (Cannon, 1927: 113). Adrenaline, concludes Cannon, produces physical changes in human subjects who report them as sensations; in some cases, those sensations are reminiscent of previous emotions felt but they do not renew or revive these (Cannon, 1927: 113).

The part of Lange's theory of emotions that confers a key role to the circulatory system has been proven wrong by neuroscience. Cannon was first able to identify the error. Although Lange's results have been disproved, his method should be considered as major milestone in the development of the feeling theories of emotions because of his attempt to reach a science of emotions based on the observation of the physical changes caused by the arousal of emotions. Moreover, Lange's work is one of the first multidisciplinary approaches to the study of emotions where empirical evidence is combined with popular opinion, one validating the other.

In fact, he uses the popular opinion, i.e. the way to represent emotions by those who are not scientifically competent in the subject, to assess the validity of the discoveries achieved through the observations of the physical changes. Although Lange believes that only the science of emotions can guarantee an objective understanding of emotions, he still leaves open a bridge between this science and the *old* ways of the popular culture. On the one hand, Lange believes that he has found a key to better comprehend emotions but, on the other, he wants to ensure that this key matches the depiction of specific emotions in popular culture. Nowadays, the literature of emotions has reached a level of maturity that can finally tie

together those aspects of emotions that were previously studied separately in the classical theories of emotions. This was guided by the discoveries made in neuroscience and psychology and offers a holistic overview on the subject. Thus, where Lange limited his comparison to similarities in physical change and how these were portrayed in popular culture, the current literature has stepped forward to reach an understanding of both the physical and subjective characters of emotions.

I will address these issues in further depth in chapter IV and champion the importance of a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the study of emotions for the formulation of a hybrid theory. Although the idea of a holistic approach to emotions will remain tame throughout the rest of this chapter, its value will be apparent in my examination of Damasio's work as a good example of a hybrid theory of emotions.

3.3 Damasio's theory of emotions: the importance of consciousness

The James-Lange theory has been used and reformulated into an empirical theory supported by recent neurobiological studies, and Damasio is one of those who chose to adopt a similar approach (Northoff, 2008: 502). However, Damasio's study of emotions has prompted him to go beyond the physiological aspects of emotions the feeling theories of emotions usually concentrate on. While the feeling theories of emotions assert that emotions are a bodily reaction, Damasio believes that consciousness is another key element of emotions. He provides a different definition of feelings as the consciousness or awareness of experiencing an emotion. In the following section, I will briefly describe Damasio's theory of emotions, consider his motivation, and examine the reasons underlying his interest in the topic. I will introduce the use of 'emotions' and 'feelings' within his theory and explain the role played by consciousness.

Damasio maintains that, from a scientific point of view, there are at least five reasons to

justify the study of emotions and feelings. Firstly, emotions and the experience we have of them are a direct manifestation of the bioregulation of a complex organism, i.e. the set of mechanisms that regulates the function, rate or extent of the biological process an organism undergoes. Comprehending bioregulation presupposes an understanding of emotions. This is particularly true with regards to those features involving the relation of an organism with the environment and influenced by factors such as culture and society. Secondly, emotions are fundamental to the survival of complex organisms. Thirdly, the study of memory, which is one of the main areas of focus in neuroscience and cognitive science, will benefit from a better understanding of emotions because, in complex organisms, the functions of memory and emotions are strictly related. Fourthly, emotions have a role in reasoning and decision-making: this is evident in non-human animals and their decisions about dangerous or beneficial situations, but also in more complex decisions made by human animals regarding ethics or scientific and technological creativity (Damasio, 2001a: 102). Fifthly, health issues nowadays common such as depression, drug addiction and untraceable pain are caused by pathologies of feelings; therefore, biomedical issues are more likely to be solved if the study of feelings is implemented (Damasio and Carvalho, 2013: 143).

Although the subject of emotions is much debated in the literature and there are several reasons to justify its importance, theories of emotions often refer to 'emotions' or 'feelings' as distinct and Damasio is one of those proposing a specific definition of those terms. The word 'emotion', says Damasio, should be used to indicate a patterned collection of chemical and neural responses, which is produced by the brain when it identifies the presence of a stimulus associated with a particular object; the processing of the stimulus can be unconscious and occurs automatically (Damasio, 2001b: 781). Emotions allow creatures to effectively handle objects and situations that can be dangerous or advantageous; most emotions can be observed directly by the naked eye or with the use of scientific instruments

(Damasio, 2001b: 781). Instead, the word 'feeling' should be adopted to designate the mental representation of the physiological changes that take place during an emotion (Damasio, 2001b: 781). As opposed to emotions (which can be publicly detected), feelings are private and contribute to intensifying the impact of a particular situation (Damasio, [1999]2000: 42), improve learning and increase the probability of anticipating the outcome of a similar situation in the future (Damasio, 2001b: 781). When referring to mental states represented by feelings, Damasio uses 'mental states' to indicate: a) the representation of the changes occurring in the body and signalled to it through the intervention of specific structures located into the central nervous system; b) alterations in cognitive processing caused by secondary signals sent from parts of the brain to other parts of the brain (Damasio, 2001a: 103).

Thus, Damasio introduces a very interesting distinction between 'feelings' and 'emotions', which differs from the use of these words in the previous debate between cognitive and feeling theories of emotions. Classical cognitive theories of emotions interpret 'feelings' as the consequence of an emotion, and feelings take place after a judgment about an object has been formulated. Meanwhile, the feeling theories of emotions postulate that 'feelings' are emotions and that they consist in physiological body changes. Instead, the notion of feelings used by Damasio implies a cognitive aspect which has been completely absent in the cognitive and feeling theories of emotion. 'Feelings' are intended by Damasio as an awareness (consciousness) of undergoing certain physiological changes that are caused by the interaction we have with a target (an individual, an object, a situation, etc.); this interaction is determined by both cognition and physical changes (for instance, perception) that determine an evaluation of the target and our relationship with it.

Damasio believes that the word 'emotion' has often been used in misleading and different manners, but that there are some common aspects between those different uses from a

biological point of view. He identifies five of these in his book *The feelings of what happens, body emotions and the making of consciousness* (2000). In the table below, I summarise those common biological aspects as identified by Damasio:

TABLE 3- Biological aspects of emotions

Aspects of emotions	Descriptions
Purpose	• Emotions are a complicated collection of chemical and neural responses that constitute a pattern. • All emotions have a role to play: they assist the body in maintaining life and lead to the creation of circumstances advantageous to the organism (Damasio, [1999]2000: 51).
Biologically determined	• Emotions are a biologically determined process which depends on innate brain mechanisms resulting from evolution. • However, the process of learning and culture can modify how emotions are expressed and understood (Damasio, [1999]2000: 51).
Brain areas elicited	• The arousal of emotions is due to patterns that occupy a restricted ensemble of subcortical regions. • Their purpose is to regulate and represent body states (Damasio, [1999]2000: 51).
Automatic arousal	• Emotions are caused automatically without conscious deliberation. • Even though individuality and culture can have an influence on emotions, this impact is not strong enough to break the stereotypical, automatic and regulatory character of emotions (Damasio, [1999]2000: 51).
The whole body is subject to them	• Emotions can use the entire body to send signals. • This means that they also have an effect on the way that some brain circuits operate (Damasio, [1999]2000: 51-52).

Considering the features of emotions described by Damasio and reported in the table above, pain cannot be considered as part of the emotion group. In fact, although pain and emotions can be caused by the same stimulus, unlike an emotion, pain is caused by a damage or a dysfunction in the body (Damasio, [1999]2000: 70). Damasio explains why pain should not be classified as an emotion using the example of a hot plate that has burnt the skin off fingers; his physical reconstruction of the pain felt is as follows. The heat activates the nerve fibres located in the part of the skin damaged and the activation of those fibres causes the destruction of the skin cells; in turn, the destruction of the skin cells triggers the release of chemical substances in the area affected. Thus, blood cells sent to repair the area release other chemicals such as peptides and ions. The chemicals released stimulate other nerve

fibres, and all the nerve fibres generate a neurological pattern to send information to the nervous system; this generates the feeling of pain (Damasio, [1999]2000: 71-72). Damasio's detailed description of pain well suits his purpose of justifying why pain should not be considered an emotion. At the same time, this shows how physical changes caused by the burnt fingers are felt as pain only when information regarding what is occurring arrives to the mind; the same happens when we say that we are feeling an emotion.

Damasio claims that emotions begin with the activation of specific brain circuits, and the classification of these circuits by neuroscience is made possible by research conducted on patients affected by neurological diseases and focal brain damage. The study conducted on people with those types of damages is later integrated and completed with neuroimaging of people who do not have a neurological disease (Damasio, [1999]2000: 60). This comparison between people affected by neurological diseases and healthy people has allowed to assume that emotions are implemented by a small number of brain sites, the majority of which are located below the cerebral cortex and identified as subcortical. The main subcortical areas fundamental for emotions are located in the brain-stem region, basal forebrain and hypothalamus. These subcortical sites process different emotions, but each emotion is caused by a specific neurological pattern. Furthermore, some of those subcortical areas are responsible for the identification of certain stimuli that express emotions. The amygdala, for example, which is located in the depth of both temporal lobes, is fundamental for recognising fear in facial expressions, as well as expressing and conditioning fear (Damasio, [1999]2000: 61-62).

To sum up Damasio's thesis, an emotion is elicited by the stimulation of certain brain regions. When these regions are stimulated, they send signals to other regions of the brain and to the whole body. The signals are sent in two ways. Via the blood stream, the orders are sent in the shape of chemical molecules that act in the receptors located in the body

tissues. And via a neural pathway, which is composed of electrochemical signals that act in other neurons, muscular fibres and organs (Damasio, [1999]2000: 67).

For Damasio, the way we interact with an object and the emotional responses caused by those interactions are often pre-existing in us due to a process of evolution. However, he also argues that our emotional capacities go further than evolution: in fact, emotional patterns can change, disappear and new ones can be created in the course of our lives. This is due to the constant interactions of the organism with the environment and other organisms, and the experiences created by these interactions. For example, visiting a house similar in shape to that in which we lived in as a child can make us feel good although nothing pleasant has happened to us there (Damasio, [1999]2000: 57).

With regards to the infinite number of potential emotions, Damasio writes:

> The consequence of extending emotional value to objects that were not biologically prescribed to be emotionally laden is that the range of stimuli that can potentially induce emotion is infinite. In one way or another, most objects and situations lead to some emotional reaction, although some far more so than others. The emotional reaction might be weak or strong – and fortunately for us it is weak more often than not – but it is there nonetheless. Emotion and the biological machinery underlying it are the obligate accompaniment of behaviour, conscious or not. Some level of emoting is the obligate accompaniment of thinking about oneself or about one's surrounding (Damasio, [1999]2000: 58).

This passage supports the idea that, for Damasio, emotions are really powerful as they affect several aspects of our life. Emotions always accompany our thoughts and can be a good or bad companion. For example, they help us to be reactive in a dangerous situation, speed up our reactions to ensure our body is ready to react to the situation unfolding in front of us. In other occasions, emotions are not as nice a companion; for instance, certain manifestations of fear cause the paralysis of an organism and prevent it from escaping a dangerous situation. The point is that we cannot escape from our emotions and stop feeling them: they are ingrained in us through an evolutionary process and can change with us over the course of our life. After all, emotions constitute an extraordinary instrument; not only do they provide

support for the organism, but they shape and alter the way that an organism behaves when facing the same or a similar situation in the future.

3.3.1 Prerequisites of an emotion and the role of consciousness

I will here explore two of the biological aspects of emotions acknowledged by Damasio which have already been briefly introduced in table 3. I will begin with the aspects Damasio considers as prerequisites an organism must satisfy to be able to feel an emotion and will then move on to the role played by consciousness.

In *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (2003), Damasio identifies four prerequisites which an organism must satisfy to feel an emotion. The first requirement is to have a nervous system; an organism feels emotions when they have a body and instruments through which they can represent that body. For instance, organisms such as plants have a body but are not equipped with structures similar to the brain and therefore cannot mentally represent their body parts and the states of those parts. Plants react to stimuli (light, heat, nutrients, etc.) but are not conscious of those stimuli and the effects they have on the body (Damasio, 2003: 109-110).

The second prerequisite consists in the fact that feeling an emotion requires a nervous system able to map the body structures and the body states, and to transform this information into mental patterns or images. Without the production of those images, says Damasio, our nervous system would only map the physical changes that are at the core of our feeling of emotions, but without reaching the point where we actually feel those changes (Damasio, 2003: 110).

The third prerequisite is that feeling an emotion (in the traditional sense of the term) requires that the organism be aware of the content of this emotion; therefore, an emotion presupposes consciousness because we cannot feel an emotion we are not conscious of

feeling (Damasio, 2003: 110). The last one is that when we feel an emotion, the brain has a double necessity: some of its areas are involved with eliciting the physical changes and leading to the production of the body maps, while at the same time other areas interpret this information as feelings (Damasio, 2003: 110).

The fourth aspect identified by Damasio, consciousness, is very controversial as he appears to believe that feeling an emotion requires that a person be always conscious of the fact they are feeling that emotion. For example, if we are angry at someone but not conscious of it, can we still be considered to be angry? I think Damasio's answer to a question of this type would probably be that we can experience an emotion without being conscious that our body is physically and mentally reacting, but that this experience cannot be labelled as emotion because having an emotion requires being aware (or conscious) of the changes.

Damasio refers to the word 'consciousness' to indicate the *I am* that we experience every day. For example, at the moment, I am typing on my laptop and I am not only conscious of the thoughts related to what I want to write, but I also feel and am conscious of the fact that it is me who is at the desk carrying out this activity. Damasio uses the word consciousness to indicate "the unified mental pattern that brings together the object and the self" (Damasio, [1999]2000: 9); "consciousness is an entirely private, first-person process we call mind" (Damasio, [1999]2000: 10). A lot of the activities that we undertake, such as speaking, moving, thinking, imagining etc., are carried out with us being aware that we are doing them. We have the *feeling* that there is a person doing that particular action and this person is us. Damasio reverts to the same example of the burnt finger to illustrate the difference between physical pain and an emotion to explain the role played by consciousness:

> Without knowing and self, it would not have been quite 'you' withdrawing the arm. Under those circumstances, the reflex would belong to the organism but not necessarily to 'you'. […] Although all of these responses, simple and not simple, occur reliably in comparable situations in all conscious human beings, consciousness is not needed at all for the responses to take place (Damasio, [1999]2000: 73).

When I start to feel pain, I am conscious that the person experiencing the skin damage is me. Following Damasio, if I were not conscious (if there were not an *I am*) my brain, if healthy, would have sent signals to my arm to withdraw the arm and prevent any further damage to the finger. I would react to the hot temperature, but not be conscious of what is happening and of what my body is doing. Damasio asserts that we often respond to certain objects and situations without being conscious because consciousness is not always indispensable to completing certain responses successfully. In fact, according to Damasio, there are reactions that do not require consciousness; for instance, comatose patients are not conscious but still capable of reacting to stimuli such as the rubbing of their skin with a movement of their limb and face (Damasio and Carvalho, 2013: 74).

Even though consciousness is not necessary to the activation of certain bodily responses, it still has a role to play in the feeling of emotions. Damasio arrives at the conclusion that consciousness is important to feel an emotion after he met a man affected by epilepsy and relates this anecdote in *The Feeling of What Happens Body, Emotion and The Making of Consciousness* (1999). Both Damasio and the man with epilepsy were sitting in an examination room when, suddenly, their conversation was interrupted by changes in the man's behaviour. His face seemed irresponsive to the commands sent by his brain: he could not talk when his name was called and he did not reply to other questions asked. He began to move, took a sip from a cup of coffee and then kept moving. All of a sudden, the man became conscious again (Damasio, [1999]2000: 6). Damasio thinks that day, in the examination room, he witnessed a case where a person transitioned from a condition of full consciousness to one of being a mind deprived of the sense of self. This episode made him question how the brain, which processes the signals in which the emotions originate, can make the same organism aware of the fact that it is experiencing an emotion (Damasio, [1999]2000: 8).

In fact, for Damasio a *complete* account of emotion requires an understanding of three different biological phenomena: "an emotion, the feeling of that emotion, and knowing that we have a feeling of that emotion" (Damasio, [1999]2000: 8). He thinks that there is a fundamental difference between experiencing an emotion and feeling one. As we have already seen, an organism may have the ability to represent what we define as a feeling through mental and neural patterns, but without being able to know that the feeling is taking place (Damasio, [1999]2000: 36).

3.3.2 The body loop and the as if body loop

As stated previously, Damasio thinks that emotions are caused by a neural disposition located in some subcortical areas of the brain. Those structures are activated when they are in contact with an object, and their activation causes both physical and cognitive changes (Damasio, [1999]2000: 79). The bodily changes are caused by two mechanisms which Damasio labels as the body loop and the as if body loop (Damasio, [1999]2000: 79-80). I will now explain those mechanisms and their relation to consciousness; both accounts will prove useful to better understand Damasio's conception of emotions.

The body loop indicates the humoral signs, i.e. the chemical messages submitted through the blood stream, and the neural signals, i.e. the electrochemical messages sent via nerve pathways, that are activated during an emotion. The as if body loop refers to the changes caused by the sensory body maps, which give the person the feeling of their body undergoing changes when it is not (Damasio, [1999]2000: 79-80). This distinction proposed by Damasio has fundamental consequences for the reconstruction of empathy that I will propose in the second part of my dissertation. His as if body loop opens up the possibility of feeling what another organism is feeling even though our body is not undergoing the same changes. The importance of the as if body loop for the feeling of empathy will be further discussed in

chapters V and VI where I will introduce other hypotheses related to the connection between an individual feeling empathy and the target of their empathy.

Damasio describes the as if body loop mechanism as the ability to make us feel as though a change is occurring in our body when it is not actually happening (Damasio, 2003: 115). Specifically, through the as if body loop, the brain can reproduce a model of the possible somatic changes that the body will undergo; this allows the organism to be ready and able to respond to stimuli quicker, even before they actually take place (Dunn et al., 2006: 242). The as if grows more powerful through experience, more precisely through adaptation to the environment. Certain images are associated with certain body states, and the repeated association of specific images with particular body states creates a neural pattern that becomes active when specific groups of neurons are activated. Those neurons allow individuals to bypass the body and avoid a consumption of energy (Damasio, [1994]2006: 156).

During the as if body loop, the cognitive changes are initiated by the secretion of certain chemical substances in the nuclei of the basal forebrain, hypothalamus, and brain stem. Those substances are then carried to other regions of the brain. When neuromodulators such as monoamines are released in the cerebral cortex, basal ganglia and thalamus, they trigger numerous alterations in the brain function. Damasio asserts that science has been able to disclose only a few of those alterations and then proceeds with the identification of what he believes to be the most important ones: a) the initiation of specific behaviour connected to bonding, playing, exploration and nurturing; b) an alteration in the way body changes are processed, such as a different modality to filter or allow signals, the pleasant and unpleasant character of signals and the way that signals are inhibited or enhanced; c) a variation regarding the modality through which the cognitive processes take place, for instance in the speed of the production of auditory and visual images, or the focus on the image from sharply

focused to vaguely focused (Damasio, [1999]2000: 79-80).

In the case of both body loop and as if body loop, the physical and cognitive changes are witnessed by our consciousness, through which we become aware of feeling an emotion. Damasio explains the intervention of consciousness during an emotion in the following words:

> I propose that (1) the inaugural proto-self is represented at second-order level; (2) the 'object' that is about to change the proto-self (the neural-activity pattern in emotion-induction sites) is represented at second order level; (3) the ensuing changes in proto-self (enacted by 'body loop' or 'as if body loop' mechanisms) are also represented at second-order level' (Damasio, [1999]2000: 280).

This is a complicated passage that needs to be untangled. Here, the 'proto-self' refers to a non-conscious state of the mind during which the self collects and records all the signals caused by physical changes. Only after those changes take place due to the work of the body loop and the as if body loop does the self-become aware (conscious) of undergoing those changes. Consciousness is like the birthday girl/boy who arrives last at the party. Everything has been set up for her/him: food, music, gifts and so on, but the host's efforts will remain fruitless if they forget to invite the guest of honour. Like the birthday girl/boy, consciousness shows up when the rest has been prepared and, without its intervention, we would not be aware of the bodily changes caused by the emotion, although those changes would still be monitored by the proto-self.

Even though Damasio follows Lange's idea that the physical aspects are important for the study of emotions, he also acknowledges the importance of the cognitive side of emotions. In fact, Damasio believes that a complete emotion requires three elements: an emotion, the feeling of that emotion and the awareness of that feeling. All three elements presuppose the work of the mind, as having an emotion means that an organism interacts (physically and mentally) with an object or a situation and that this interaction produces physical changes felt by the organism experiencing the emotion. Thus, the subjective

character of emotions is expressed by Damasio via his idea of consciousness: I am the one feeling that emotion and not someone else. This idea connects with Damasio's understanding of feelings as the mental representation of changes happening to the body.

I consider Damasio's theory to be of tremendous importance for the understanding of emotions: his holistic approach succeeds in solving some of the issues caused by the separation of physical changes and cognitions as it appears in both classical cognitive and feeling theories of emotions. Although interested in emotions through the prism of the somatic changes they entail, Damasio captures the role played by cognition in the feeling of emotions and details the role of consciousness as a system through which we become aware of the somatic changes. For this reason, Damasio's theory is of a hybrid type as it recomposes the strong connection between physical changes and our conscious interpretation of those feelings.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, I reconstructed the theories of emotions elaborated by Lange and Damasio and aimed to achieve: an understanding of the passage from the classical feeling theories of emotions to the more contemporary ones; the determination of the role of physical changes in the arousal of emotions and their interaction with cognition.

Lange's work is one of the first attempts at explaining what happens when we feel an emotion from a physiological perspective. He decides to put aside the issue of the subjective character of emotions and focus on something he believes can be measured and scientifically explained: the physiological causes and effects of emotions. Thus, Lange's methodology can be considered as one of the first attempts to study emotions at a multidisciplinary level since, in his research, science cooperates with other ways of understanding and representing emotions. This methodology involving the connection of empirical findings to other sources

is also adopted in the current philosophical debate about emotions, where philosophers often refer to disciplines such as neuroscience or psychology to elaborate more comprehensive theories of emotions. Lange's methodology will inspire some of the considerations about empathy developed in chapter V, where I will discuss how the concept of 'empathy' as used in both the scientific and narrative literature suffers the same uncertainties as that of 'emotions'.

Like Lange, Damasio believes that emotions are a complicated subject of study due to their private nature; science can therefore play a key role in their understanding. Damasio proposes a theory of emotions that depicts emotions as helping the organism by, for instance, contributing to the trigger of a response when facing a given situation. He argues that emotions are triggered by specific chemical reactions and neurological patterns which find their source in evolution but can be modified through experience. Moreover, Damasio sheds light on the role played by consciousness. He describes consciousness as the awareness of undergoing physical and cognitive changes. Therefore, the experience of emotions belongs only to those equipped with mechanisms predisposed to map the changes and keep track of them.

In chapter VI, I will come back to the topic of the 'as if' body loop as a mechanism that simulates certain body states as if they were taking place. There, I will argue that empathy as an emotion requires the simulation of both the cognitive and physical changes experienced by the person who is the target of our empathy.

Chapter IV

Towards a hybrid theory of emotions

4.1 Introduction

In chapter I, I introduced the core ideas behind the classical cognitive theories of emotions, and, in my analysis, reconstructed the functions fulfilled by both evaluative judgments and physical changes as components of emotions. The evaluative judgment is the primary or key element of an emotion; it consists in the evaluation of an object. Meanwhile, feelings aroused by the physical changes result from this judgment and are, therefore, the secondary aspect of an emotion. As seen in chapters I and III, the classical and more contemporary feeling theories of emotions are in disagreement with the classical cognitive theories on the role of feelings as physical changes arising due to the formulation of a judgment, and assert that those changes are indeed the key element of emotions. The primary role of the physical changes has been reinstated in the contemporary cognitive theories of emotions using the concept of 'appraisals' (I already defined the meaning and function of appraisals in chapter I), or through what Scarantino defines as an elastic strategy. Appraisal theories refer to physical changes as part of the appraisals that originate an intuitive evaluation of the object which is the target of the emotion.

In this chapter, I will address Scarantino's elastic strategy as an attempt by the contemporary cognitive theories to override the limitations of the core of the classical cognitive theories of emotions. I will then present Solomon's theory of emotions as an instance of a theory that makes use of an elastic strategy. Finally, I will pursue my assertion that a hybrid theory of emotions, combining elements from the cognitive as well as the feeling theories of emotions is best suited to shed light on the nature of emotions.

4.2 The elastic strategy

In his article "Insights and Blind Spots of the Cognitivist Theory of Emotions" (2010), Scarantino identifies some of the downsides in the cognitive theories of emotions and summarises attempts by cognitivists to address them. In the table below, I outline Scarantino's main arguments against the role of judgments as key component of emotions, along with their counterarguments as presented in his article. Scarantino's critique will strengthen my assumption in chapter I that the classical cognitive theories have mutated over the years to respond to the challenges raised by opposing theories. Scarantino's concept of 'elastic strategy' is an attempt from advocates of contemporary cognitive theories of emotions to solve and avoid the criticisms deriving from the use of judgments in the classical cognitive theories of emotions.

TABLE 4- Scarantino: evaluative judgments, arguments and counterarguments

Argument	Counterargument
• **Human babies and non-human animals feel emotions.** • However, they do not have the language abilities necessary to formulate a judgment (Scarantino, 2010: 743).	• Cognitive theorists retort that judgments do not require language abilities; • For instance, researchers such as Solomon and Martha Nussbaum advocate that human babies and non-human animals can feel emotions. • Both categories (human babies and non-human animals) make judgments and those judgments are not articulated or spelt out (Scarantino, 2010: 743).
• **Emotions have a particular body phenomenology and involve specific body feelings**. • Thus, emotions cannot be judgments because 'judgments do not possess a distinctive body phenomenology' (Scarantino, 2010: 743).	• Cognitive theorists respond that judgments can encompass a specific body phenomenology. • In this regard, Solomon uses 'bodily judgments' to indicate the body phenomenology, while Nussbaum sees judgments as something dynamic that can vehicle physical changes and bodily sensations (Scarantino, 2010: 744).
• **On their own, emotions can motivate certain behaviours**; • instead, judgments can have an effect on behaviours only when they are accompanied by a desire (Scarantino, 2010: 743).	• Cognitive theorists assert that judgments can have a constitutive motivational dimension. • About this, Solomon believes that the types of judgments involved in emotions are always accompanied by a desire and that there is a quasi-conceptual connection between the two (Scarantino, 2010: 744).
• **The arousal of emotions can take place unconsciously without deliberations.** • On the contrary, evaluative judgments are conscious and	• Cognitive theorists reply that judgments can also be unconscious and non-deliberate. • For instance, Solomon says that judgments are not always deliberate, conscious or articulated. • Instead, Nussbaum asserts that in her cognitive theory

deliberate (Scarantino, 2010: 743).	of emotions, the term cognitive does not refer to a calculus, a computation or a reflexive self-awareness (Scarantino, 2010: 744).
• **Emotions can be insensitive to judgments**. • Therefore, emotions are not judgments because they can be cognitively impenetrable (Scarantino, 2010: 743-744).	• Cognitive theorists think that judgments are also cognitively impenetrable. • In this regard, Nussbaum says that sometimes people change their mind about the beliefs that are at the base of their emotions, but they continue to have that emotion. • Nussbaum uses the case of two contradictory beliefs: As a child, Sandra was afraid of dogs; she then learnt that dogs are not dangerous, but is still afraid of them (Scarantino, 2010: 744).

Scarantino proceeds by comparing the arguments against the role of evaluative judgments as constitutive of emotions, and uses both Solomon's and Nussbaum's work as an instance of cognitive theories of emotions that refer to the concept of judgment without exhibiting the issues generally attributed to the classical cognitive theories of emotions. With this comparison, Scarantino (2010: 742) introduces the thesis that the contemporary cognitive theories of emotions' recourse to an elastic strategy solves the blind spots in the classical cognitive theories of emotions.

Scarantino's (2010: 742) 'elastic strategy' indicates that the notion of judgment in the classical cognitive theories of emotions is stretched to such a point that it ends up absorbing examples used to deny the validity of these theories' stance on judgment. The elastic strategy seeks to justify the approach of the theory under attack. Although this might seem positive at first glance, the use of an elastic strategy leads to two main problems. Firstly, the elastic strategy has fomented the debate between cognitivists and anti-cognitivists who have argued on the role and the meaning of judgments for decades (Scarantino, 2010: 745). Secondly, the elastic strategy renders the cognitive theories of emotions immune to counterexamples, making them unfalsifiable (Scarantino, 2010: 745).

4.2.1 Against a stretched notion of judgment

Scarantino further addresses his critique that a stretched notion of judgment renders the

cognitive theories unfalsifiable by referring to two examples I will revisit and comment on. To facilitate the understanding of Scarantino's (2010: 745) argument, I have reformulated it into the shape of an Aristotelian syllogism and labelled it *the syllogism of the judgments*.

The Anti-cognitivist states:

- ***Major premise***
  Emotions on their own are causally efficacious (that is, on their own they can motivate behaviours).
- ***Minor premise***
  Judgment as they are understood conventionally lack the property of being causally efficacious on their own.
- ***Conclusion***
  Emotions are not judgments.

Next, a variation of the same argument, but this time in reference to a property present in judgments but not in emotions.

The Anti-cognitivist states:

- ***Major Premise***
  Judgments require the mastery of linguistic abilities.
- ***Minor premise***
  Emotions do not require the mastery of linguistic abilities.
- ***Conclusion***
  Emotions are not judgments.

The syllogisms show that, in order to falsify the cognitive theories of emotions, one would need to refer to a property that either emotions or judgments lack, or have to assert that emotions are not evaluative judgments. However, for Scarantino, the use of the elastic strategy avoids the conclusion reached by anti-cognitivists because it enables the assertion that judgments do have the property of being causally efficacious and, in some cases, do not require the mastery of linguistic abilities. The conclusion achieved by the syllogisms above is only rendered false because it is based on a notion of judgment which has not previously been clearly established and defined. Instead, the notion is stretched up in light of the anti-cognitivist critique to incorporate features that are not present in the concept of judgments as intended in the classical theories of emotions. From that derives the first issue identified

by Scarantino: still today, different cognitive theories of emotions differ on the meaning of judgments, and dispute their nature.

I rename Scarantino's second example *judgments as a bulletproof jacket*: falsifying the hypothesis that emotions are judgments of a certain type *T* will require finding a judgment of type *T* that is not an emotion, or an emotion which is not a type *T* judgment. To do so, we will need a theory independent from the cognitive theories of emotions and which explains what a judgment of type *T* consists in (Scarantino, 2010: 746). To Scarantino, no cognitive theory in the literature currently offers an exhaustive account which, independently from their theory of emotions, establishes the features of judgment type *T* (Scarantino, 2010: 746). However, a definition of judgment *T* does exist, whose meaning is based on a pre-existing theory of emotions and which morphs as and when needed to overcome the criticisms it faces (Scarantino, 2010: 746). From this derives Scarantino's second issue: the cognitive theories are unfalsifiable because they stretch the notion of 'judgment' and abstain from presenting a pre-existing definition of it.

I believe that the elastic strategy proposed by Scarantino goes further than an extension of the concept of judgment. The theories that adopt an elastic strategy to solve the downsides of the classical cognitive theories stretch their boundaries to the point of absorbing the main characteristics of a group of theories that they have often challenged and regarded as simplistic for not truly understanding emotions: the classical feeling theories of emotions. I base my hypothesis on my discussion in chapter I, where I argued that the concept of 'appraisal' is being used as substitute for 'judgment' to avoid the criticism faced by the core of the classical theories of emotions. As seen in chapter I, the 'appraisal' is used to indicate an immediate evaluation of the features that belong to an object and the changes caused by the interaction with this object; this evaluation does not require the ability to grasp and affirm propositions and makes use of the physical changes occurring prior to and after the arousal

of emotions. Thus, the elastic strategy intended by Scarantino as a tool used by the cognitive theories of emotions to avoid counterexamples also applies to the notion of 'appraisal', as it is used to identify the cognitive side of emotions and replaces 'judgment'.

Although, in Scarantino's view, the elastic strategy has a negative connotation, it has actually benefitted our understanding of emotions. In fact, whereas the classical theories of emotions' main goal was to separate themselves from rival theories and become the dominant theory of emotions, the more contemporary theories adopt a *moderate* approach and are prepared to embrace characteristics from rival theories where this helps them reveal the nature of emotions. In this regard, both Damasio's theory (see chapter III) as a feeling theory and Solomon's as a cognitive theory are good examples of methodological approaches that tackle the problem of emotions. They take into consideration both cognition or judgments and physical changes as elements whose interactions constitute emotions. This offers a new perspective for the study of emotions by reconciling elements previously studied in isolation by the classical theories into a more comprehensive and articulated theory.

In the following sections, I will propose a reconstruction of Solomon's theory of emotions, paying particular attention to his definition of judgment. I will argue that Solomon can be considered as adopting a very moderate cognitive approach, or even a hybrid theory of emotions. In fact, Solomon (2003: 1-2) himself argues that his work was labelled as belonging to the cognitive theories, a label he fought for years, 'not because it was wrong, but because "cognition" is so variously or ill-defined'. I will further develop the question of whether Solomon's theory should be considered as cognitivist at the end of this chapter, and draw a comparison between the work carried out by Solomon and that of Aristotle to support my idea that Solomon's theory of emotions is an example of how contemporary moderate cognitivists have *borrowed* from Aristotle not only the concept of judgment, but also the

importance of physical changes in the arousal of emotions.

4.3 A bumper-sticker slogan: "emotions are judgments"

I will begin with my reconstruction of Solomon's theory of emotions by starting with his critique of the conception of emotions as feelings and move on to describe the role of judgments as a key factor in emotions.

According to Solomon (2004: 76), the hypothesis that emotions are physiological and have only partially to do with cognition of the world around and inside us is 'primitivistic'. It should be swapped for a more 'intelligent' hypothesis that takes into account the cognitive side of emotions. Although the assumption that feelings are emotions is plausible and of common-sense, says Solomon, it turns out to be incorrect where its purpose is to build an adequate analysis of emotion (Solomon, 2007: 137). "Feelings are, by their nature, dumb and without intelligence" and as Solomon considers that we are, in some cases, responsible for our emotions, "one does not expect an unintelligent feeling to carry with it any sense of responsibility at all" (Solomon, 2007: 137). Solomon's thesis is based on the diverse uses of the word 'feeling' which, in the literature, is used to describe different types of experiences. About the meaning of feeling:

> [Feeling] is an enormously promiscuous and generous term that includes all sort of experiences, from the feeling of cold water dripping down the middle of your back to the feeling that something is awry in the kitchen to the experience that Watson and Crick must have when they started feeling that DNA must involve some sort of detachable double structure. Feelings, in other words, range from the simple and sensuous to the extremely complex and sophisticated (what we often call intuitions). Only some of these feelings are involved in what we call emotions (Solomon, 2007: 137-138).

In the passage quoted, Solomon asserts that the different uses of the word 'feeling' all have in common their reference to an experience, something that is felt physically. Some of those feelings do not have an intelligent or rational character because they are a mere physical *reaction* caused by the interaction of a body with an external or internal cause, much like

when we look at the sun and close our eyes due to the intensity of the light. Instead, other type of feelings, such as those involved in intuitions and emotions, depend upon cognitions or judgments that determine what shape (physical reaction) the feelings will assume.

For Solomon (2007: 138), feelings are felt and this sensation is registered by the consciousness. Feelings are not something purely intellectual, like thoughts for instance, but always refer to physical changes. Solomon does not deny that emotions can involve feelings, but disagrees that emotions are just feelings of a type that does not involve any kind of cognition. As a result, he favours the expression 'emotional experience' to indicate that an organism is aware or conscious of feeling an emotion, and to separate emotions from those feelings that involve only sensations (Solomon, 2007: 141).

Solomon reiterates that emotions cannot be feelings by using the metaphor of the hydraulic model, which often appears in the literature to evoke the image of something mechanic and passive. The hydraulic model depicts a fluid that fills up the body and the mind, with the hydraulic pressure generated by the presence of this fluid causing many of the aspects that characterise our emotional experience. In the event that the hydraulic machine forces us to express our emotions, we can still manage to stop the pressure and avoid expressing those feelings (Solomon, 2007: 142). However, the fact that we can stop the pressure once the hydraulic machine has already started evokes the passivity of the organism and hints at the fact that emotions happen outside of our voluntary control. The will interferes only after the emotion has taken place, and its only function is to constrain or control the emotion (Solomon, 2007: 144).

Moreover, the hydraulic model:

> Too sharply separates the emotions from the self and it too radically removes the concept of responsibility from our conception of our emotional lives. It is not enough that we can control our emotions. […] emotions can be cultivated, educated, and sometimes even willed, not just controlled. That is what emotional integrity is all about (Solomon, 2007: 144).

The hydraulic model reduces the importance of consciousness because it is based on the

assumption that emotions exist independently of consciousness, and that emotions force us to behave in certain ways (Solomon, [1976]1993: 83). Thus, for Solomon, labelling them as feelings implies reducing the strength or power of our emotions to a physical reaction whose features are determined by cognition. Not only do we control our emotions, but we are responsible for them because emotions can be educated and directed to specific objects through experience. I will address the education of emotions at a later stage, when drawing a parallel between Solomon's and Aristotle's theories of emotions.

4.3.1 "What is an emotion?"

This section focuses on the role of judgments as featured in Solomon's theory of emotions. Solomon's answer to the question "What is an emotion?" will be a preamble to what emotional judgments are:

> An emotion is a judgment (or a set of judgments), something we do. An emotion is a (set of) judgments which constitute our world, our surreality, and its 'intentional objects'. An emotion is a basic judgment about our Selves and our place in our world, the projection of the values and ideals, structures and mythologies, according to which we live and through which we experience our lives (Solomon, [1976]1993: 125-126).

In this passage, Solomon affirms that an emotion is one or more judgment(s) which constitute(s) the link connecting us to the outside and the inside worlds. With this, Solomon intends that the formulation of judgments is determined by all those factors that make us a specific individual and distinguish us from someone else. He mentions examples such as values and ideals, but other factors play the same function (e.g. personality, memories, ambitions, preferences, etc.) which are not explicitly mentioned by the author in this passage.

Even though Solomon considers that 'emotions are judgments' is the bumper-sticker slogan of his theory, in a more mature phase of his work he will integrate and partially modify his first answer to the question of knowing what emotions are by qualifying them as 'a kind of judgment - or rather, a complex of interlocking judgments, desires, and intentions'.

Thus, if at first Solomon believed that judgments are the sole constitutive element of emotions, he later acknowledges that judgements should be combined with desires and intentions. Desires are intended by Solomon as the motivation and the *conatus* of an emotion, as they have the power to move us in a specific direction, and can cause and stimulate an emotion (Solomon, 2003: 14).

Solomon is aware that his definition of emotions is not customary. In fact, he asserts that emotions are generally depicted as consequent to judgments, as a slightly delayed reaction to them and never as judgments themselves. He also refers to the feeling and behaviour theories of emotions as two groups of theories that do not refer to judgment at all; the former identifies emotions as a feeling followed by the perception of changes happening in the outside world, whilst in the latter emotions are a preparatory or avoidance reaction to a disturbing stimulus (Solomon, [1976]1993: 126). In all three theories Solomon uses as examples, the perception of an object alone is considered sufficient to determine the arousal of an emotion; Solomon does not believe this to be accurate as an emotion always involves a "personal evaluation of the significance" of that object (Solomon, [1976]1993: 126). For Solomon, this hypothesis is supported by the fact that people display different emotional reactions in the face of the same accident or object. The differences in these emotional reactions can be attributed to a conditional process that pushes us to react in a specific way, but this only explains the origin of the dissimilarities and not their nature (Solomon, [1976]1993: 127). In fact, Solomon asserts that the differences in emotional reactions of individuals can only be understood by abandoning the model of emotions proposed by the hydraulic system, where emotions are represented as passive reactions. Emotional reactions can be different because they do not constitute reactions but rather interpretations or evaluations; emotional responses "are not responses to those evaluative judgments but rather they are those judgments" (Solomon, [1976]1993: 127). Thus, Solomon subscribes to the

definition of emotions as reactions where the term 'reaction' is intended to include a person's conscious judgmental reaction to events in relation to the object of their emotion (Solomon, [1976]1993: 127).

In Solomon's slogan "emotions are judgments", the term 'judgment' is not used to simply indicate the act of attributing a quality to a situation or an object, but rather as "subjective engagements in the world", and "a way of cognitive grappling with the world" (Solomon, 2004: 78). For Solomon, the term 'judgment' adequately represents the close but not indispensable link between emotions and perceptions, and can also be used to designate emotions provoked by memories, the association of ideas, or thoughts and reflections (Solomon, 2004: 82). Solomon thinks it preferable to use the term 'judgments' instead of 'thoughts', as the latter is too sophisticated, intellectual and demanding to be applied to emotions when it comes to linguistic ability, articulation and reflection (Solomon, 2004: 82).

As introduced by Solomon in his theory of emotions, judgments do not contain any conscious thought and therefore cannot be considered deliberate (Solomon, 2007: 206); by conscious thought, he means those circumstances where we think about something and are aware of this experience. Generally, a deliberate judgment is intended as deriving from a thought process of which we are aware and the modalities of which are clear (Kruglanski and Gigerenzer, 2011: 97); for instance, a judgment of this type takes place when we are doing a calculation and thinking about the fact that 5 is equal to 2 plus 3. Furthermore, for Solomon, not only are emotional judgments not deliberate, but they also are not articulate (expressed through a language) because we do not have to spell them out to ourselves or others (Solomon, 2007: 206).

Solomon uses a kinaesthetic judgment as an example and comparison with the judgments involved in emotions. When we walk in a familiar place, such as our house, we do not think of or deliberate on each step we take, but we do make judgments about how we should put

our feet or which direction we should take. If we fell, we might start to think or deliberate on each step, but this is not the case in everyday life. In the same way, when we have emotions, we have emotional judgments, and even though those judgments differ from thoughts and deliberations and are not articulated, they still teach us about the world and how it relates to us (Solomon, 2007: 206).

The judgments present in emotions belong to the evaluative type (Solomon, 2007: 205) and since "emotions are about the world, engagement in and with the world", we must have knowledge of the world that surrounds us in order to engage with it. However, this knowledge does not need to be perfect, and it may well be partial or erroneous (Solomon, 2004: 160). As a result, having an emotion does not imply that our engagement with the inside and outside worlds derives from exact judgments. In this case, the term 'exact judgments' can have three meanings. Firstly, judgments can be correct in light of the situation, but fail to take in to account larger implications, as if instead of looking at the whole picture, we only focused on one detail which would flaw our analysis of this detail. Take, for instance, in the case of parents feeling angry at their child because the child cried all night and prevented them from sleeping; if the child is very young or has a good reason for crying, the parents' annoyance is inappropriate in light of the situation (Solomon, 2004: 161). Secondly, judgments can be correct according to the fact, but not according to the interpretation we assign them. A person, for example, is jealous because their lover politely talks with a stranger at a party; if no flirting is involved, the emotion is not appropriate despite the fact that the two stakeholders are in fact engaged in a conversation. (Solomon, 2004: 161). Thirdly, an emotion can occur on the premise of incorrect information, and this happens principally when the emotion is more urgent and spontaneous. For instance, a manager who is always under pressure gets mad at their assistant because they have lost important paperwork whereas it emerges the folders are not lost, but located in the manager's

briefcase (Solomon, 2004: 161).

Those examples about emotions which contain incorrect or misunderstood facts about the world form the keystone of Solomon's idea that emotions involve a form of intelligence. In fact, "being wrong presupposes being capable of being right" and "being stupid already presupposes having some (just not enough) intelligence" (Solomon, 2004: 161). The option of being wrong presupposes representation or intentionality. Therefore, once we concede that we can be wrong in our emotions, we also concede that they are in some way representational or intentional.

4.4 Different types of evaluative judgments

I will now concentrate on Solomon's classification of evaluative judgments as components of an emotion, and then proceed to illustrate what he deems the relation existing between those judgments, language and culture to be. For him, the evaluative judgments that are part of emotions can be divided into groups in such a way that the judgments belonging to the same group exhibit common features which single them out from judgments present in other groups (Solomon, 2008: 209). The three groups of judgments in question are: responsibility, status and distance; below is a reconstruction of their features as intended by Solomon.

The first group of evaluative judgments analysed are those involving (or not) responsibility. Solomon specifies the characteristics of this group through the case of judgments that are part of emotions of self-embarrassment, such as shame and embarrassment. The emotion of shame involves a judgment of the following type: 'I am in an awkward situation, and I should be blamed for it'. On the contrary, embarrassment involves a judgment such as: 'I am in an awkward situation, and I should not be blamed for it'. In the case of shame and embarrassment, one limb of the judgment is identical (being in an awkward situation). However, where shame is concerned, the person blames themselves

for being in that situation; in the case of embarrassment, a person does not blame themselves for the situation. The judgments about shame and blame involve a reconstruction of the situation and a determination of the subject's degree of guilt, which are often related to and influenced by the ethical and cultural context in which they are expressed (Solomon, 2007: 210).

Solomon asserts that one can argue that the judgment of responsibility is present in shame but not in the case of embarrassment, as the latter involves an absence of feelings of responsibility rather than a denial of responsibility (Solomon, 2007: 210). Whilst Solomon may agree to this objection, he postulates that the idea of responsibility is present in our emotional experiences although this is not visible in the more primitive conceptions of emotions (Solomon, 2007: 210). There are circumstances, says Solomon, in which we feel embarrassed because we take responsibility for our actions, sometimes without even being aware of it. This does not, nonetheless, mean that we always take responsibility for the actions that make us feel embarrassed. Take the example of the man singing badly in the shower, with unexpected and unwanted viewers listening in through the open window. This is a situation in which the idea of responsibility may or may not be present in the singer's mind (Solomon, 2007: 210). However, in the case of shame, the role played by responsibility is more evident than in the case of embarrassment. Someone is in charge of a group of students on a field trip, for instance, and one of the children does something dishonourable and in contradiction with the established rules. The person in charge might feel ashamed because they will take responsibility for the incident although it was not their fault (Solomon, 2007: 210).

The second group is the judgments of status and includes the type of judgments present in emotions such as contempt, resentment, and hatred. In spite of their differences, these emotions have ethical implications and consequences because they are hostile and involve a

harsh view on individuals, as well as an idea of superiority in regard to the target of the emotion (Solomon, 2007: 211). Contempt involves a judgment of marked superiority, which is usually expressed as 'looking down to someone' or identifying the target of contempt with 'lower animals' (rat, worm, snake, etc.) or human waste (scum, slime, or sleaze) (Solomon, 2007: 211).

For Solomon, the opposite occurs in the case of resentment; this is a defensive emotion belonging to those who, feeling weak or oppressed, bear a grudge against individuals considered to be stronger (Solomon, 2007: 211). In both contempt and resentment, there is a judgment of status, either of superiority looking down at inferiority (contempt), or of inferiority looking down at superiority (resentment) (Solomon, 2007: 211). While contempt and resentment involve a judgment of difference in status, hatred is an emotion of equality (Solomon, 2007: 211-212). Solomon does not further describe why that is, and without further elements to understand this concept, I have difficulties to consider this a plausible idea. In our everyday life, when we feel hatred for someone, we do not value the target of our feeling as our equal but more often as superior or inferior to us depending on what they have done.

The third group consists of those types of judgements which express a level of distance; in this case, the individual who experiences the emotion tries to maintain or close up a distance from the object of their emotion. The type of distance can be physical, spatial or emotional. For instance, if we love someone, we try to be intimate and as close as possible to our lover. On the contrary, if we are disgusted by someone, we try to keep our distance from them (Solomon, 2007: 212).

4.4.1 Emotions, language and culture

After determining what evaluative judgments are, I will consider them in relation with

language and culture. In Solomon's theory of emotions, language plays a role in shaping emotions and the way we experience them (Solomon, 2007: 135). Language is an instrument used to communicate ideas and represent objects, both of which can be referred to as things that may exist or not in the real world. There are different kinds of languages, and each expression in a language was created with the utilitarian purpose of representing something, but all languages are influenced by the culture in which they are used. For Solomon, it is not possible to literally translate an emotion into another language because the word used to describe that particular emotion is altered by the context of the language and of the culture (Solomon, 2007: 135). Emotions are not ineffable, but describing an emotion experienced is difficult because we cannot expect to reproduce the actual emotion and the intensity that derives from it through language (Solomon, 2007: 136). Solomon uses the example of a joke; when we explain the meaning of a joke, it loses some of its effect. The same happens to emotions: when described with words, they become less intense than when experienced (Solomon, 2007: 136).

The problem of translating emotions into specific languages leads Solomon to think that a conceptual analysis of emotions is not an appropriate way of studying emotions. Solomon defines the 'conceptual analysis of emotions' as an examination of the words used to express and represent emotions, with the idea that emotions can be revealed only through the concepts used to describe them (Solomon, 2004: 162). Solomon believes that the objectives of the conceptual method cannot easily be accomplished and he uses the French translation of the word 'shame' as an example (Solomon, 2004: 162). French speakers distinguish two different kinds of shame: '*pudeur*' is the shame felt by Eve and Adam in Eden when they realise they are naked; '*honte*' is the shame caused by being caught in a scandal (Solomon, 2004: 91). Since, in this language, shame has two different meanings and is expressed with two different words, it is hard to apply the result of the investigation to the French language

as general rule. Not all languages possess a vocabulary which can be translated literally. For example, the word 'embarrassment' in English is used to indicate the shame associated with feeling inadequate or guilty in public. Spanish has a similar word –'*embarazada*' – but it means being pregnant (Solomon, 2004: 91). Thus, the conceptual analysis is valid only if applied to a certain context, language and culture in which the words used to describe emotions are investigated (Solomon, 2004: 162).

In Solomon's work, the difficulties deriving from a conceptual examination of emotions do not constitute evidence of the fact that an analysis of this type is not worth pursuing, but it seems that Solomon identifies a limit: the possibility of elaborating a general theory of emotions. Following Solomon's argumentation, a general theory should use an intelligent approach focusing on all the aspects that contradistinguish emotions and, amongst those aspects, the culture, context and language used to describe those emotions. Therefore, if Solomon is right in asserting that we express emotions in different ways and react to the same objects in different ways, it is impossible to elaborate a general theory of emotions that is applicable to all emotions felt by human beings. It would be more reasonable to think that a general theory of emotions is possible if circumscribed to a specific group of people who live in a similar context and share the same culture and values.

The problem of the use of language to express emotions leads to the question of whether, for Solomon, there are basic emotions that belong to human beings. Since the judgments involved in emotions are influenced by factors such as context, situation, culture and language, is it still possible to speak about basic emotions? Solomon answers this question by saying that it is a plausible hypothesis that some of our emotional responses are the outcome (or product) of a natural selection. In the past, fearless creatures, for example, may have been killed by other creatures because they did not sense danger. On the contrary, those who experienced fear survived because they acted according to the emotion and found a way

of escaping the situation (Solomon, 2007: 250). Even though the existence of neural patterns inherited from evolution is a plausible explanation, Solomon considers this hypothesis to be only partially true. Anger, for instance, is considered a basic emotion, but if this emotion is basic in a city like New York, this was not the case – until recently – in Tahiti. Therefore, some emotions can be more basic in certain cultures than others (Solomon, 2007: 251). Solomon refers to the study about the people of Tahiti, who rarely display anger. The apparent repression of anger in this particular population is due to the fact that this emotion has been so demonised that people are scared of feeling angry for fear of being categorised as '*running amok*'. This expression is used to indicate a sudden explosion of violence displayed first against family, and then strangers (Marks et al., 1995: 282). Thus, both New Yorkers and Tahitians feel angry, but the way this emotion is expressed is very different due to social and cultural constrains.

Solomon does "not doubt that culture and biology are the yin and yang of our emotional inheritance" (Solomon, 2007: 251), but he tries to avoid focusing on one of those aspects only because both are equally important. Keeping in mind that both evolution and culture are important, I will now explore further the role played by culture. Solomon believes that people from different cultures show a diverse way of expressing and feeling emotions, and those differences can be summarised in seven points:

- The same emotions can differ in intensity as well as in the manner in which they are expressed. Those variations are caused by the fact that the importance of an object, person or situation varies in different groups of people because of the differences in the rules governing the manner in which emotions should be displayed.
- In different cultures, the repertoire of emotions can vary: certain emotions can be absent, more or less intense and frequent.
- Different groups of people present various nuances of emotions.

- The object, subject or situation that triggers an emotion can differ from culture to culture.
- Depending on the culture of reference, the way and context in which an emotion is expressed may be interpreted as appropriate or inappropriate.
- Emotions can determine the arousal of certain behaviours which are, in turn, influenced by culture.
- Depending on the culture of reference, the verbal expression used to indicate emotions may vary (Solomon, 2007: 252-253).

The points identified by Solomon are not new in the debate on emotions; in fact, the thesis that emotions are determined by culture, language and context has already been assessed in chapter 1 where I identified the core of both behaviourist and contextualist theories of emotions. That being said, Solomon's interest in this topic constitutes a further lever on which to base his main thesis: emotions are rational because they require a cognition (judgment) shaped by several factors which, overall, make us a unique individual and differentiate us from others. Those factors which play a role in the formulation of the evaluative judgment are the cause of different emotional reactions in individuals because the nuances of emotions displayed might vary according to culture, language of origin and personality of individuals, even in the case of those emotions that are considered as basic.

4.5 Solomon's theory: a modern cognitive theory, or a hybrid theory of emotions?

I consider my reconstruction of Solomon's theory of emotions to be sufficiently developed to determine whether his theory constitutes something more meaningful for the debate on emotions than an elastic strategy used to avoid the downsides of the classical cognitive theories of emotions. In fact, it is true that Solomon's evaluative judgment does not feature the qualities generally attributed to judgment. Nevertheless, the elasticity for which experts such as Solomon have advocated assisted in understanding the nature of the cognition that

is a constitutive part of emotions. In this section, I will determine whether Solomon's theory of emotions can form part of the classical cognitive theories of emotions as described in Chapter I, or whether his work should be understood in the light of a hybrid theory instead.

Both Solomon and the classical cognitive theories of emotions identify judgment as a key component of emotions. While the classical cognitive theories of emotions seem to intend judgments as deliberative, articulate and requiring the use of a language, Solomon uses 'judgments' to indicate something more complex than simply judging an object as we do in the case of a conscious thought such as a calculation. Solomon alters the meaning of 'judgment' set out in the classical cognitive theories of emotions by identifying and adding certain features not present in the original meaning. In fact, to the question "what is a cognition?" Solomon replies that a cognition is a judgment, which is both reflective and pre-reflective, and may refer to either know-how (for instance, skills and practice) or knowing what (propositional knowledge). Solomon seems to think that a theory of emotions must incorporate the more physical side of emotions, i.e. feelings or affects; this aspect cannot be subject to a propositional analysis but also cannot be reduced to a simple biological manifestation. Feelings, says Solomon, are important for emotions because they are one way of emotionally engaging with the world; feelings are not separate from cognition, neither are they a bodily reflex of judgments (Solomon, 2004: 88). In fact, Solomon says that "they are judgments of the body, and this is the missing element in the cognitive theories of emotions" (Solomon, 2004: 88). With the expression judgments of the body, Solomon separates himself from the core of the classical theories of emotions: he asserts not only that feelings have a fundamental role as components of emotions, but also that they have an intelligent side.

It is important to mention that Solomon arrives at the conclusion that feelings are an important aspect of emotions during a more mature phase of his work. In fact, at the beginning of his career, he emphasised the role of evaluative judgments as a cognitive aspect

of emotions and completely dismissed their bodily aspect. Solomon's extremist view about emotions matured into a more moderate one after he read the works of Aristotle, David Hume and Jean-Paul Sartre (Solomon, 2007: 205); it is Solomon's moderate view I focus on in this chapter. Hume's philosophy has encouraged Solomon to adopt a polemic perspective on the idea that reason should be the slave of passions (Solomon, 2007: 205). Instead, Sartre has pointed Solomon in the existentialist direction and pushed him on a path according to which we are responsible for our emotions. Solomon recognises the influence of Aristotle in his view that emotions are an essential and indispensable part of civilised life (Solomon, 2007: 205). I believe there is a deeper connection between Solomon and Aristotle than the mere importance both place on emotions to achieve a fulfilled life; I will develop this idea in the following section.

Whereas the classical cognitive theories of emotions consider feelings as a mere consequence of judgments, in the case of Solomon, feelings seem to share a deep relation with the judgments which guide them. Solomon arrives at this conclusion during the last phase of his work, while, at the beginning, he believed that feelings were irrelevant to the understanding of emotions. He documents his own theoretical shift in these words:

> I claim that judgments are essential to emotions, although I no longer say, as I did those many years ago, that feelings and physiology are irrelevant. I now agree with the Neo-Jamesians that they are also essential, but I still insist that no feeling and no physiological response ever counts as emotional unless it has the property of intentionality, *aboutness* (Solomon, 2007: 205-206).

As stated above, in this passage Solomon acknowledges that his position concerning emotions has shifted in a direction where feelings are no longer irrelevant or secondary, as purported in the classical theories of emotions, because they only arise after a judgment has been elaborated. However, he also asserts that the feelings involved in emotions are those which possess the property of intentionality, which it is safe to assume he intends as the fact and emotion directed at a target which is the object of an evaluative judgment. Solomon does

not further clarify what the relation between feelings and judgments is. Which occurs first (feeling or judgments) is irrelevant to him, but he places importance on the link between the two and the lack of sharply defined boundaries between feelings and judgments.

In fact, it seems that for Solomon the intelligent or rational character of emotions allows feelings to be directed at some specific targets rather than others. The use of the terms 'intelligent' or 'rational' relates to the fact that feelings arise quickly, putting us in a position to react in a certain way. The speed of our emotional reaction is caused by several factors (such as previous experiences, memories, associations of ideas, etc.) that operate unconsciously, directing our emotional reactions. This assumption might be plausible in light of Solomon's insistence, in several parts of his work, that emotions can be educated. I interpret that hypothesis of the education of emotions as a sign of the fact that our feelings carry cognitions or judgments.

At the beginning of this Chapter, I referred to the article in which Scarantino asserts that contemporary cognitivists such as Solomon and Nussbaum satisfactorily address the downsides of the classical cognitive theories of emotions by adopting an elastic strategy. For Solomon specifically, the use of an elastic strategy refers to his notion of judgments which does not share the features outlined in the classical cognitive theories of emotions. Solomon's theory of emotions does not exclude the role of feelings but, on the contrary, recognises their importance by saying that intentional (directed to an object) feelings and physiological responses can be classified as emotions (Solomon, 2007: 205). Scarantino's elastic strategy applies to Solomon's theory of emotions, but if Scarantino interprets the stretched concept of judgments as a hazard for verifiability, we should also consider that the use of a stretched concept of judgment allows us to overcome the barriers that divide the cognitive and the feeling theories of emotions.

Although Solomon's theory might be defined as very moderately cognitivist, I believe

that his theory would be more suited to a group where emotions are not only determined by judgments (or cognition, appraisal depending on the theory of reference) but also by feelings. Thus, I propose that Solomon's theory fits into the hybrid theories of emotions. Feelings have been neglected by the classical cognitive theories of emotions; this group of theories negatively circumscribes the role played by feelings by asserting that feelings are the physical manifestation of emotions, but do not constitute them. Instead, Solomon gives feelings an active role, asserting that they contribute to developing the information necessary to formulate an emotional judgment. Solomon stretches the concept of judgment to the point where he crosses the boundaries that divide the cognitive and feeling theories of emotions. This crossover deserves to be highlighted and remembered, and I think that giving his work the label of moderate cognitive theory, albeit not erroneous, is not fit for purpose.

Theories of emotions have been separated into categories such as cognitive, feeling, behaviourist, evolutionary, etc. for centuries, and each of these groups displays unique characteristics. The expression 'hybrid theory' rests on the assumption that understanding emotions requires overcoming the boundaries between groups of theories and taking into consideration different approaches which, together, can contribute to the development of a more complete understanding of emotions.

4.5.1 Behind the mask: an unexpected Aristotelian

In this section, I will draw some comparisons between the theories of emotions elaborated by Solomon and Aristotle, and I will argue that the connection between the two extends further than the acknowledgement that emotions are an indispensable aspect of life in society.

Solomon's position that emotions can be educated and do not consist in feelings – meaning in this case that feelings are simple bodily reflexes – is not so distant from that

advanced by Aristotle. Both Solomon and Aristotle postulate that emotions involve feelings but also judgments, and that both are decisive elements of emotions; thus, the presence of *cognition* enables the education and shaping of emotions in the course of our life. The possibility of educating our emotions is caused by the fact that emotions involve an evaluative judgment, which is not a simple attribution of a predicate to a subject, but a collection of information directed at establishing a connection between ourselves and the inside and outside worlds.

The second element Solomon and Aristotle have in common is their assessment that judgments can influence our emotions and vice versa. In chapter II, I analysed the passages of *The Art of Rhetoric* where Aristotle explains how judgments can shape emotions and how emotions can influence the formulation of new judgments. Solomon's view is similar when he states that emotions "have the power to constitute reality in a certain way. They bestow value as well as appraise it" (Solomon, 2007: 162). Solomon borrows the words 'constitute' and 'bestowal' respectively from Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Irving Singer (1925-2015) to indicate that an emotion shapes reality, from the point of view of the person experiencing that emotion (Solomon, 2007: 162). Borrowing the spectacles of Kant, and using emotions instead of colourful lenses, I will follow Solomon's example of the lover, which well illustrates the saying "beauty is in the eye of the lover" (Solomon, 2007: 162) . When we wear the glasses of love, we are more focused on the virtues of our lover, for example their beauty or their intelligence, than other people who do not have the same romantic relationship (Solomon, 2007: 162). In the case described by Solomon, we are not inventing or attributing a new quality to our lover, but are highlighting something that really does exists (Solomon, 2007: 163) .

The hypothesis of the power of emotions over judgments and vice versa finds confirmation in the section where Solomon confronts the life style of a cynic and that of a

Buddhist asserting that emotions improve our lives. A cynic, for example, who always sees the rotten side of things, will have a miserable life; on the contrary, a Buddhist who always sees the good side of things will have a more peaceful life (Solomon, 2004: 165).

Solomon does not explain these examples well: he merely mentions them, without clarifying their value in light of his theory. Acknowledging this, I will try to better elucidate one of the above examples as it is relevant to my comparison of Solomon and Aristotle. I will take into consideration the Buddhist who always sees the good in life and what this entails. An easy answer is that if the love glasses prompt us to see and exaggerate the positive sides in our lover, the good glasses worn by the Buddhist will allow us to see all the good that surrounds us. If this is the case, it is also true that this good *attitude* towards the world is shaped through a series of evaluative judgments that, over time, have determined the arousal of positive emotions. As a result, judgments and emotions influence each other, following a game where what has been felt and judged previously influences what is judged and felt subsequently. This idea seems to be applicable to both Solomon and Aristotle, but neither of them ever explicitly mentions anything of the like.

The third element of similarity between Solomon and Aristotle is that both value the importance of recognising that all human animals feel emotions and that in this we are all equal. Solomon thinks that being a human who feels emotion has more value than simply having an emotion (Solomon, 2007: 165). This added value consists in recognising that we experience an emotion and that other people do too; we can distinguish when we experience an emotion and when other people do (Solomon, 2007: 165). The power of recognising what other people feel is central in Aristotle, and this is particularly evident when he describes the function of tragedy. According to Aristotle, tragedy can teach the audience how to behave properly when faced with adversity because they learn from understanding how the characters in the scene feel; they learn from those characters because those characters share

the same features.

The fourth common element between Solomon and Aristotle is deeply connected with the previous one: they believe that emotions are rational. According to Solomon, "emotions enhance our lives" and "all emotions have as their aim the maintaining or the maximising of self-esteem" (Solomon, 2007: 182). That is:

> They are instrumental in getting us what we want (and helping us to avoid what we do not want), and sometimes they themselves may be (or seem to be) what we ultimately want: true love, for example, and especially that all-embracing grand emotion (insofar as is it an emotion), happiness (Solomon, 2007: 182).

Solomon describes emotions as rational in order to highlight the same aspects as identified by Aristotle, Spinoza and Damasio, whose main thesis is reviewed in chapters II and IV. All three (Solomon, Aristotle and Damasio) believe that emotions are rational because they are helpful strategies in our life; emotions are a tool that assists us in reaching our goals and, in the case of Solomon and Aristotle, the highest good: happiness. As tool, emotions provide assistance, a quick response, designed to identify and reach what is good and avoid what can cause harm.

4.5.2 A better way to study emotions: a hybrid theory

Solomon's theory of emotions is similar to that elaborated by Aristotle because both elaborate a *hybrid* theory of emotions. Solomon and Aristotle merge the key concepts of the classical cognitive and feeling theories and, from this combination, develop two interesting theories. In the previous chapters, I outlined several theories of emotions with the purpose of highlighting the complexity and the fragmentation that lurks behind the debate on emotions present in the literature. Different theories of emotions have been proposed over the centuries, with no satisfactory results as the main focus remained exclusively in the understanding of certain aspects of emotions, neglecting the importance of the connection between those aspects. This is particularly evident in the case of the classical cognitive and

feeling theories of emotions. The absence of a comprehensive theory of emotions that takes in to account the several aspects that are singularly analysed in the classical theories is probably due to the fact that the topic of emotions was first considered as an ancillary topic worth investigating only as part of a bigger theory. The then limited understanding of how the body and the mind operate would have constituted another factor explaining this. In the current debate about emotions, a deeper knowledge of the mind and the body is available and the subject of emotions is mainstream. Yet, researchers in different fields still find it difficult to understand each other and cooperate for the elaboration of a comprehensive theory of emotions.

In chapter I, I divided some of the theories of emotions present in the literature into groups according to the method used and the manner in which emotions are interpreted. I defined those groups as *classical* because my analysis focused on those features that remained the same over time. What this revealed is that those classical groups of theories present blind spots that their more contemporary counterparts have resolved. I used as an instance the case of the changes in the cognitive and feeling theories of emotions, which are nowadays prepared to take into consideration some aspects of emotions investigated with other methods or in other disciplines.

In this regard, Aristotle constitutes a good example of a researcher developing a philosophy that integrates different subjects and methods with the intent of arriving at the most accurate explanation possible. As seen in chapter II, Aristotle never formulated a complete theory of emotions and, to understand his hypothesis, we need to have recourse to those fragments in which he tackles this topic. From the reconstruction of those fragments follows that, for him, both judgments and feelings are crucial elements of emotions. However, Aristotle's theory of emotions is often presented as the prototype of a cognitive theory of emotions because he attributes a key role to judgments. This kind of interpretation

of the work of Aristotle has been discussed in chapter II where I argued that his theory is more suitably defined as hybrid. Although Aristotle's theory is only based on fragments of his work, and the reconstruction of the role of the sensitive and rational faculties remains incomplete, it still deserves to be mentioned and remembered as it seems that centuries after its formulation, the debate about emotions has been dominated by the splitting up of feelings and judgments.

In fact, the classical cognitive theories of emotions have embraced judgments as the only key element of emotions. On the contrary, the classical feeling theories of emotions postulate that feelings are the main component of emotions because there would be no emotions without them. Both the classical cognitive and feeling theories of emotions draw very sharp boundaries between judgments and feelings and, thus, fail to explain certain characteristics of emotions.

In chapter III and in this chapter, I selected the theories of emotions elaborated by Damasio and Solomon as representatives of the contemporary feeling and cognitive theories of emotions. Although Damasio and Solomon are often associated with different groups of theories, both recognise the importance of the interaction between what Aristotle defines as judgments, and feelings as a cause of an emotion. Damasio and Solomon seem to believe that emotions are something rational and this rationality is caused by the fact that emotions are not only passive physical body changes or descriptive judgments.

Emotions are evaluations of the world inside and outside us and those evaluations not only cause physical changes, but are also determined by physical changes. Solomon and Damasio's theory of emotions offer an interesting perspective for the study of emotions because, even though one focuses on the mental side of emotions and the other on their physical side, they reconcile both aspects in their theories. In these four chapters, which constitute the first part of my thesis, I started with the classical theories of emotions and

reached the conclusion that the most suitable theory to understand the nature of emotions is a hybrid one, such as those examined earlier. This study and the reference to hybrid theories allowed me to identify some features of emotions that are considered as such even by opponent theories. Moreover, the same theories outline a specific method: hybrid theories take into consideration aspects of emotions that are generally studied independently with the purpose of arriving at a better understanding of how emotional arousal takes place and what the components of emotions are. According to those theories, both cognitive and physical changes should be considered as constitutive of emotions.

In figure 1, I recap what an emotion is and the factors that determine its arousal and features. The arousal of an emotion is caused by the interaction we have with an object; this interaction is based on an evaluation whose main components are the cognitive and physical changes aroused in us before the emotion takes place. In turn, the evaluation of the object determines other cognitive and physical changes that are perceived (felt) by the individual as the emotion.

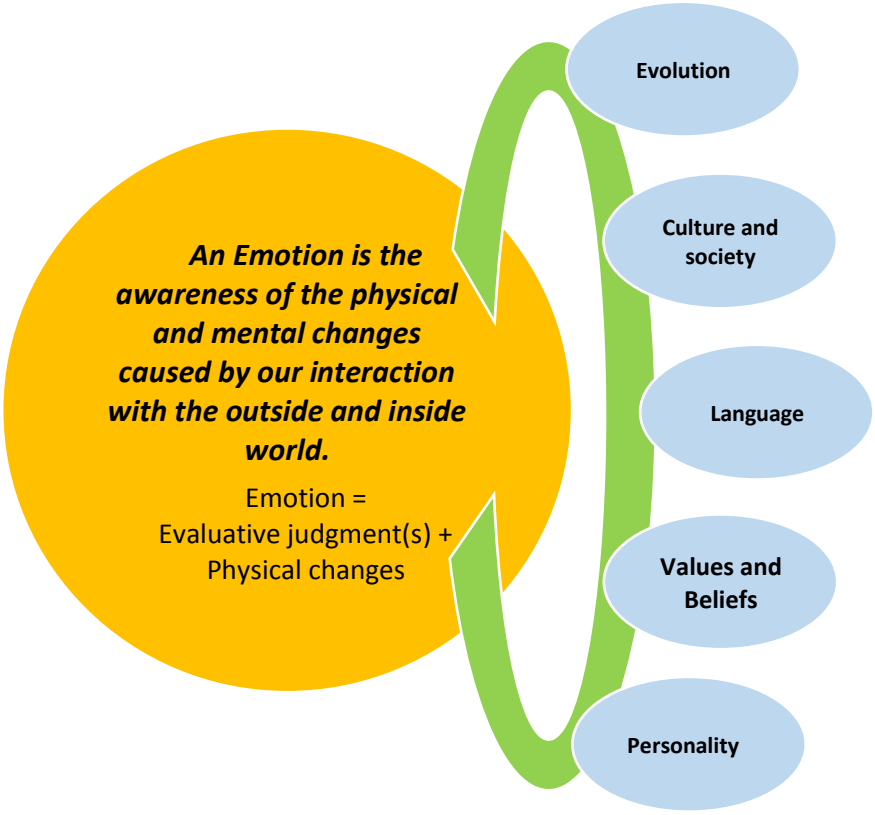

FIGURE 1-Emotion's nature

In the second part of my work, I will maintain my hypothesis that a hybrid theory of emotions is the most suitable to understand the complexity and the nuances that hide behind

the way we express and feel our emotions. In fact, I will refer to a hybrid theory to determine what empathy is, and whether it qualifies as an emotion.

4.6 Summary

I debated the use of the concept of evaluative judgment as an elastic strategy aimed at avoiding the downsides of the classical cognitive theories of emotions, and then moved on to delineate the features of the evaluative judgment as they emerge in Solomon's theory of emotions. I argued that, through his theory, Solomon identifies the features belonging to evaluative judgments and the elements that distinguish them from other types of judgments.

After comparing Solomon's theory with Aristotle's, I supported my hypothesis that both constitute an instance of a hybrid theory of emotions and argued that this approach is the most suitable to understand the nature of emotions but also as a guide to determine whether empathy can be considered as an emotion. With 'hybrid theory', I intend a theory of emotions that recognises cognition (here defined as one or a set of evaluative judgment(s), physical changes and feelings (that is, awareness of undergoing physical and mental changes) as constitutive of an emotion. Thus, the adjective 'hybrid' suggests that our understanding of emotions can benefit from the use of a theory that overcomes the boundaries set up by the classical theories of emotions and is prepared to embrace new hypotheses or relinquish old ones when discoveries are made in other fields than philosophy.

No other discipline is better suited than philosophy to make clarity on the copious literature on emotions, determine the elements in common between theories and aggregate them to provide an insight into emotions that can be adopted by those referring to emotions to explain other phenomena and who, therefore, need a starting point. I am facing the same issue as I decided to establish whether empathy is an emotion: comparing empathy with 'emotion' required me to first identify what an emotion is.

Chapter V

A preliminary definition of empathy

5.1 Introduction

This chapter marks the beginning of the second part of my thesis, in which I will assess whether empathy can legitimately be conceived as an emotion based on the hybrid theories of emotions I examined in part one. Two elements will be instrumental in this comparison: a definition of emotion that takes into consideration the most relevant empirical and philosophical findings on the subject, and a definition of empathy similarly based on the relevant empirical and philosophical literature. The first of these two elements is achieved in the first part of my thesis through my examination of several theories of emotions, and the identification of the features those theories commonly ascribe to emotions. I will discuss the nature of empathy and its relationship with emotions in chapters V and VI, while in the last two chapters, VII and VIII, I will reflect on the implications of considering empathy as an emotion. My work will reference empirical studies regarding the impact of physical and mental illness on empathy, and the role of empathy in the political and moral spheres.

As stated above, this chapter is dedicated to developing a preliminary account of empathy, and subsequently distinguishing empathy from sympathy. I will begin by referring to science fiction as an instance of the ambiguities affecting the use of 'empathy' and assert that both everyday language and literature are affected by the same issue. Subsequently, I will argue against the distinction between empathy and sympathy proposed by Goldie and then suggest a new definition of empathy and sympathy based on my etymological analysis of the two terms.

5.2 Empathy in science fiction

In this section, I will discuss three different uses of empathy as they appear in the science fiction literature, with the aim of arguing that empathy is not well defined and that the uncertainties surrounding the use of the concept in sci-fi are also present in the scientific literature. My comparison between empathy in sci-fi and in the scientific literature takes inspiration from Lange's method discussed in chapter III. He compared scientific findings on emotions with popular culture to assess whether both referred to the same features of emotions. My comparison between sci-fi and scientific literature will not only serve to argue that 'empathy' does not have a clear definition, but also to determine the common elements in the use they make of the term.

Science fiction has accustomed us to the unusual; bizarre creatures, space and time travel, futuristic technologies and societies are just a few of the cornerstones of this genre. Those imaginary universes arising from the creative minds of sci-fi writers have provided a fertile ground for the discussion of empathy as the experience of what others feel and think. The first case I wish to examine here is the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) written by Dick, which became very popular after being used as source of inspiration for the film *Blade Runner* (1982) directed by Ridley Scott. The novel begins with one of the major characters, Rick Deckard, arguing with his wife about the mood organ and the way it should be programmed (Dick, [1968]1972 3). In an Earth destroyed and contaminated by a nuclear war, people use a device to set their emotions and adjust them according to their schedule. Emotions are an important aspect in the life of each of those humans; not only do they use the device every morning but, in this world, emotions are the only way of distinguishing humans from machines or droids. In this apocalyptic depiction of the future, an instrument is used to connect people to each other: the empathy box. Isidore, one of the book's characters, describes the empathy box to his new neighbour in these terms:

> But an empathy box', he said, stammering in his excitement, 'is the most personal possession you have! It's an extension of your body; it's the way you touch other humans, it's the way you stop being alone. But you know that. Everybody knows that. Mercer even lets people like me'. He broke off. But too late; he had already told her and he could see by her face, by the flicker of sudden aversion, that she knew. 'I almost passed the IQ test', he said in a low, shaky voice. 'I'm not very special, only moderately; not like some you see. But that's what Mercer doesn't care about (Dick, [1968]1972 54).

Wilbur Mercer, the leader of the dominant religion on Earth (Mercerism), uses this electric device to connect himself with his followers; when a person touches the box handles, they feel what Mercer experiences. Consequently, all individuals using the device feel the same - even Isidore, who is considered a 'chickenhead' due to his genetic disorder and his below-average mental faculties, can feel what Mercer feels. As the Earth no longer is a healthy environment and the majority of individuals have been moved to Mars, the empathy box represents one of the few methods still available for individuals to feel as though they are part of a group.

Although this is a sci-fi novel, Dick well describes the role assumed by empathy in a society or group of people because he presents empathy as the only way of connecting human beings who live in different worlds. Even those, such as Isidore, who experience discrimination due to their physical and intellectual abilities can find a connection with others and feel less lonely. Thus, for Dick, emotions are a key aspect in the life of human beings; this is supported by his account of the mood organ. I already briefly touched upon the subject of moods in chapter II, where I argued that Aristotle's state of mind might be akin to moods. Ekman identifies moods as something that differs from emotions due to their time course and ability to trigger or inhibit the arousal of certain emotions; for instance, a euphoric mood can determine the arousal of positive emotions such as joy (Ekman, 1994: 56-57). Moods can be generated by a dense emotional experience and, differently from the majority of emotions, do not manifest in a specific facial expression (Ekman, 1994: 57-58). In the case of Dick's novel, setting up the right mood by using a machine has become a routine activity performed most of the time with the purpose of reducing the rise of negative

feelings that can lead to sadness or loneliness. Manipulation of the mood and the desire for human connections are both depicted with Mercer's use of the empathic box to make the life of his followers less miserable, and distract them from the suffering caused by the contaminated world in which individuals are left alone to try to survive.

Dick does not only refer to empathy as a connection established by the empathy box, but he also considers it the only feature that distinguishes human beings from androids. The machines' level of sophistication means that their physical appearance and reactions have become identical to those of human beings in all but one aspect: they are not programmed to feel empathy. In the book, the Voight-Kampff Empathy test is used to assess whether a subject is an android by measuring of the dilation of their pupils when answering questions. During the interrogation, the subjects are asked questions that will generally cause the arousal of emotions in those who are able to feel empathy. For instance, the bounty hunter Dick Deckard asks android Rachel:

> 'Okay', he said, nodding. 'Now consider this. You're reading a novel written in the old days before the war. The characters are visiting Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. They become hungry and enter a seafood restaurant. One of them orders lobster, and the chef drops the lobster into the tub of boiling water while the characters watch'. 'Oh god', Rachael said. 'That's awful! Did they really do that? It's depraved! You mean a live lobster?' The gauges, however, did not respond. Formally, a correct response. But simulated (Dick, [1968]1972 41-42).

According to Deckard, the response given by Rachel is correct considering that no one would find the chef's behaviour morally and socially acceptable. Indeed, the novel is set at a time when non-human animals are a rare and precious asset on the brink of extinction due to environmental pollution. Consequently, the idea of killing a lobster generates disapproval, which Rachel should have not only expressed in words, but also physically displayed with a dilatation of her pupils. Her verbal response was as expected of a human, but her body failed to display a physical reaction matching her words. Bounty hunters such as Deckard use such tests to distinguish human beings from androids. The Voight-Kampff Empathy test is based

not only on the assessment of physical and verbal responses, but also on a moral code sanctioned by a majority of humans; the test refers to a moral transgression to assess how the subjects react to it. It follows from this that Dick links morality and empathy: empathy refers to a moral code used to determine whether something is acceptable or not.

5.2.1 Empathy and telepathy

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* empathy has two functions: it connects human beings and helps them determine what an adequate behaviour is. Meanwhile, *The Marvel Universe* makes use of a concept that resembles empathy as described by Dick, but labels it telepathy. Specifically, in *The X-Men*, Professor Charles Xavier, the founder of the School for Gifted Youngsters, is a mutant who can use telepathy. He is able to sense what others are experiencing (emotions and thoughts) and uses the information collected to assist people in danger, or to fight against villains. In this case, telepathy is used as a tool to adopt the best possible action according to the circumstances, for example the Professor can help young mutants in his school because he can sense what they are experiencing. The manifold telepathic abilities of Professor Xavier (e.g. manipulating the mind of others, modifying perception to make himself invisible, or causing others memory loss and amnesia) are based on the empathy that allows him to connect with others.

In the *Star Trek* franchise, both empathy and telepathy appear in a much more distinct form than in the Marvel universe. The planet of Betazoid is inhabited by a race physically identical to humans, except for the eyes (their iris is entirely black) and the brain (Betazoids have an additional lobe that is responsible for their telepathy). The telepathic abilities of Betazoids consist in sensing the emotions and thoughts of the majority of other races and animals; some Betazoids can also manipulate the mind of others. Telepathy as defined in *The Marvel Universe* and in the *Star Trek* franchise are practically identical: in both cases,

the telepaths sense what others feel and think.

Star Trek makes a further step in the definition of empathy by providing a distinction between empathy and telepathy. In an episode of Star Trek the original series, "The Empath" (season 3, ep. 12), some crew members of the Enterprise arrive to Minara II where they meet with a humanoid empath called Gem. In the episode, Gem heals the injuries of Kirk by absorbing them into her body before healing them. In the case of telepathy, the telepath senses what someone is feeling and thinking; meanwhile, in the case of empathy, the empath feels/experiences what others feel and think. There is a connection between individuals in both telepathy and empathy, but only through empathy does a person feel as if they were that specific person who is the target of their empathy.

Thus, even though empathy is often associated with telepathy in the sci-fi genre, one sees a specific feature of empathy emerge which will be further investigated in chapter VI: contrary to other emotions or skills, empathy allows the empath to recognise (understand) what others experience and to impersonate (simulate) those experiences as if they were that specific individual. However, the different modalities in which empathy is expressed depend on the imagination of the writers; consequently, although it might be interesting to know how they adopt empathy, they cannot be considered as a reliable source because their use of empathy is often adjusted to the plot and not based on scientific theories of empathy.

As is the case in sci-fi, empathy is used in everyday language with different meanings; take for instance those uses of empathy and sympathy: 'I feel sympathy for my neighbour' or 'You should feel more empathy for those around you'. In those examples, empathy and sympathy are both used to indicate a sort of feeling that allows the perceiver to face another person's feelings and thoughts. Although this understanding of the meaning of sympathy and empathy is good enough to communicate and understand others in everyday life, this definition alone is not sufficient to be applicable in scientific theories. More work should be

carried out to elaborate a meaning of empathy that provides the elements necessary to distinguish empathy from other phenomena. Only then can empathy be used within other theories to explain the arousal of specific behaviours and thoughts.

5.3 The etymology of 'empathy' and 'sympathy'

I will reconstruct the origin of the concepts of empathy and sympathy, concentrating on the interest in these phenomena emerging from within aesthetics in the seventeenth century. This etymological work will assist in assessing whether there exists a difference between the two terms whilst shedding light on the origin of the confusion associated with their use in both scientific literature and everyday language.

Although both terms were created in different historical periods, they are often used in connection with each other or as synonyms in the literature. The word 'sympathy' became of current use in French, German and English in the seventeenth century, where it was used to indicate an affinity between people and things (Jahoda, 2005: 152). A century later, the concept of sympathy was still cause for debate, with different theories and models proposed to explain it. Amongst them, the most famous were elaborated by Hume and Adam Smith (1723-1790), who assert that sympathy is fundamental for social behaviour. Hume studies the psychological nature of sympathy, and sees his research redefined by Smith, who says that sympathy is the bond that holds all of society together (Jahoda, 2005: 152).

The word 'empathy' derives from the ancient Greek word '*emphateia*' which indicates an intense passion or a state of emotional undergoing; '*pathein*' is the Greek root of '*pathos*' and stands for 'to suffer' or 'undergo' and therefore being in a state that is opposite to being emotionally neutral (Depew, 2005: 100). 'Empathy' was used for the first time in 1873 by the German psychologist Robert Visher (1847-1933). He uses the German word '*einfühlung*', which literally means in-feeling, to indicate the placing of human feelings in

to other individuals, inanimate objects, plants and animals (Depew, 2005: 100). Thus, in Visher's psychology of aesthetics, there is a projection of the self of the person into the target that they are contemplating (Wispè, 1987: 19). Later, in 1903, Theodor Lipps (1851- 1914) uses the concept of *einfühlung* to describe the aesthetic experience. He believes that the perception of the object of beauty might cause aesthetic satisfaction, but this satisfaction does not reside in the object perceived (Wispè, 1987: 19). In fact, the aesthetic satisfaction resides in the self of the person who perceives the aesthetic object. Two years later, Lipps enriched his notion of *einfühlung*, describing it as the activity of the self - the perception of the aesthetic object – that gives a meaning to this concept. Two kinds of knowledge are involved: the knowledge of self and that of the object; the first is caused by apperception, the second by sensory information (Wispè, 1987: 19).

Lipps adopts '*einfühlung*' as an inappropriate equivalent for the ancient Greek word '*emphateia*'. In fact, '*emphateia*' indicates an intense passion or a state of emotional undergoing and Lipps uses it to indicate an intense state of feeling that is directed to an external target (or object) that causes this condition (Depew, 2005: 100). Lipps is right to interpret '*emphateia*' as a state where a person is not emotionally neutral, but he alters this concept by adding that the individual is not emotionally neutral because their engagement with an object results in a change in their emotional status. Thus, the person self-projects onto the object they are perceiving, and the qualities of objects can be experienced only through this self-projection, because not only are those qualities sensed but they can also be felt (Wispè, 1987: 19). Lipps's use of '*einfühlung*' can be criticised for outlining a sort of animism of objects; if the person who experiences '*einfühlung*' is observing a painting or a statue and feels happy, we attribute feelings belonging to animate entities (the observer in the example) to inanimate objects. Although this is a plausible critique, seeing a painting and feeling happy as a result means that we project (transfer) a part of ourselves in this

panting and this is what Lipps labels '*einfühlung*'. '*Einfühlung*' is when we experience that a part of our psychological life belongs to an external object, and suffuse ourselves in this object (Zahavi, 2014: 130).

Lipps refers to the *einfühlung* as an instinct that has two features: a push oriented to imitations and one oriented to expression (Zahavi, 2014: 130). I will now refer to the case of anger and offer a simplified example to clarify what Lipps means when he identifies those characteristics of *einfühlung*. When June was a kid, her sister broke her favourite toy and she experienced anger for the first time. Her feeling of anger was expressed in a peculiar way and, after experiencing this emotion several times, anger became associated with that expression. For instance, a change in the tone of voice, a specific body or face posture, etc. If she witnesses someone experiencing anger, and they both express this emotion in a similar way, the anger felt by this person might trigger the same emotion in her. The same association of anger happens when June sees a painting portraying two individuals (an old person and a child) in the middle of an argument; the face of the elder (eyes staring, incarnate eyebrows and the flushed skin tone) and the body position (pointed finger towards the kid) lead June to consider that this person is as angry as she was when she was a child. Thus, in the model of empathy proposed by Lipps, we can only reproduce what people feel if we have experienced this feeling at least one time ourselves (Zahavi, 2014: 130).

According to Lipps, there is little difference between the concept of sympathy and that of empathy; he believes that 'sympathy' is just another word to indicate empathy (Jahoda, 2005: 158). However, Lipps says that sympathy can be considered as a positive *einfühlung* when it refers to a free inner participation that brings a sense of harmony to the empath; sympathy "is the harmony between a life that is foreign to me and my own drive, need, or desire for life" (Jahoda, 2005: 158-159). On the contrary, a negative *einfühlung* is the effect that someone has on the empath when behaving in an offensive or harmful manner. The use

of sympathy referred to as the positive *einfühlung* is inconsistent in Lipps's work as he, much like several German academics of that time, uses a prolix style with an imprecise use of categories (Jahoda, 2005: 159).

The word *einfühlung* used by Lipps was translated into English for the first time in 1909 by Edward B. Titchener (1867-1927. Titchener adopts 'empathy', the English equivalent of *einfühlung*, to indicate something complicated, changeable and difficult to express through the psychological vocabulary of that time (Wispè, 1987: 20). Titchener believes that we cannot know anything that happens in the consciousness of others by reasoning analogically; we may only grab information about another person's consciousness through a process of inner imitation (Wispè, 1987: 20). For Titchener, empathy is:

> The various visual images, which I have referred to as possible vehicles of logical meaning, oftentimes share their task with kinesthesis. Not only do I see gravity and modesty and pride and courtesy and stateliness, but I feel or act them in the mind's muscles. This is, I suppose, a simple case of empathy, if we may coin that term as a rendering of *einfühlung*; there is nothing curious or idiosyncratic about it; but it is a fact that must be mentioned (Titchener, 1909: 21-22).

Titchener translates the word '*einfühlung*' with 'empathy', but does not elaborate in this passage on whether he gives to empathy the same meaning as that established by Lipps. Certainly, Titchener believes that empathy is not a logical way of obtaining information regarding a target. In this case, I suppose that the term 'logical' stands for carefully thought out and in opposition to something physical. If experiencing empathy does not necessarily require the possession of logical qualities, the 'mind's muscle', an expression used to indicate the kinaesthetic aspect of empathy, is indispensable. We do not engage with a target only through our mind: engagement requires a body that reacts to what we perceive.

5.3.1 June's empathy

I have reassembled the major steps that helped in establishing a definition of empathy. I will further address this issue by examining how empathy is depicted in contemporary literature.

As seen previously, empathy was first used in aesthetic studies to explain the relation existing between the viewer and the artwork; I will illustrate this relationship with my metaphor of a stream. When we contemplate a painting, for instance, we project our whole self onto it, i.e. our personality, our memories, our current emotional status, etc. The experience of empathy resembles the image of an overflowing stream representing our self. The stream (the self) overflows into a target (for instance, a painting) and its intensity is such that the stream does not stop once it has reached the target, but splashes back in to the stream itself. The stream (the self) goes out of our persona and comes back enriched with the characteristics of the artwork that we were contemplating. In other words, when we examine a painting, we are the ones attributing a meaning to it; in doing so, we use our knowledge, emotions, personality, etc. The attribution of this meaning as an effect on us, as we feel we partake into the painting.

The adoption by aesthetic studies of the concept of empathy raised, from the beginning, the wider possible implications in using 'empathy' in other circumstances. We do not only contemplate art; when we interact with other humans or animals, we often behave much in the same way as we do when contemplating a piece of art. We are able to make contact with other organisms in a much broader way than by simply asking questions about what they are feeling and thinking. For instance, I do not need to ask my best friend if they are feeling okay, and sometimes only need to observe them to guess what they are feeling; the same is possible for people that are not close to us. The discovery and the understanding of empathy has implications that go further than aesthetic studies: it has consequences in all domains focusing on the manner in which individuals behave when surrounded by others.

Here is a first definition of empathy as currently used in the scientific literature:

> […] there is a difference between feeling an emotion for someone. Empathy is more accurately characterised as feeling an emotion with someone, and because the other is feeling it, than to portray it as feeling an emotion for someone, though the two phenomena

> are closely related and are often parts of the same complex affective experience (Snow, 2000: 66).

The quote refers to two different phenomena, both related to an emotion caused by an interaction with a third party; I will here provide an example to elucidate the difference between them. Let's refer to June again, who this time sees her sister playing happily with a new toy she just received. In relation to her sister, June might feel: a) happy as she did when she played for the first time with her favourite toy; b) angry because the same sister who broke her favourite toy now gets to play with a new one. In both cases, June feels something towards her sister while watching her play. Yet, according to the definition of empathy quoted above, June feels empathy only when she feels the same way as her sister does.

In spite of there being various definitions, there is an overall consensus according to which empathy is constituted of three elements: a) an effective response to another individual, which often involves the sharing of another person's emotional state; b) a cognitive capacity to adopt the perspective of other individuals; c) an emotional regulation that prevents confusion between self-feelings and other people's feelings (Decety and Jackson, 2006: 54).

As shown, the definition of empathy proposed above presents the same three elements generally attributed to empathy and, logically, the same downsides. This definition of empathy does not specify whether taking the perspective of others involves feelings spontaneously reproduced by the body of the empath only, or a certain kind of cognition. This leaves open the question of whether empathy is just about the sharing and understanding of feelings, or also involves an understanding of the causes leading to the emotional reaction of the target of our empathy. I suppose this question has been left unanswered on purpose, since the definition proposed aims at being generic and applicable irrespective of the theory adopted. However, as I will argue in chapter VI that empathy is an emotion, I seek a detailed definition of empathy that explains the relation between the physical and cognitive changes

arising in the empath and how it is possible for us to feel empathy and experience what others feel.

5.4 Goldie and how we think of others'emotions

Goldie advances another definition of empathy that is more precise than the one quoted in the paragraph above; I will here assess Goldie's use of 'empathy' and determine how he differentiates empathy from simply being in someone else's shoes.

Goldie asserts that there are several ways of engaging with what other persons feel and think:

> I can understand and explain another's emotion. I will call this ability *understanding*, without, I hope, suggesting that there are not important distinctions between understanding and explaining. I can 'catch' another's emotional state in the way in which children can catch each other's excitement or hysteria. I will call this *emotional contagion*. I can centrally imagine the other's emotional experiences, or imagine them 'from the inside'. This I will call *empathy*. I can imaginatively put myself in another's shoes —*in-his shoes imagining*. And I can feel *sympathy* for another. Feeling sympathy is an emotional experience, involving recognising another's difficulties, and having feelings of distress about them, as well as being motivated to alleviate those difficulties in some way (Goldie, 1999: 396).

Introducing Goldie's concept of empathy requires isolating the meaning of a few other concepts he uses and defines in *How We Think of Others' Emotions* (1999) in relation to the different modalities through which we can understand other people's emotions without, however, sharing their emotional experiences. For Goldie, the understanding of others' emotions requires the use of imagination and reason, through which we not only gather the information we already have about an individual, but also fill the gaps and find the missing pieces to reconstruct their "emotion's narrative structure" (Goldie, 1999: 399).

There are two different ways of understanding others' emotions: a) we can think about someone as a person who is very similar to us given their feelings, thoughts, character and points of view; b) we can reason about another being objectively, as if they were the object of a scientific study whose behaviours follow causal laws (Goldie, 1999: 399). Goldie asserts that both modalities make use of observation of the bodily changes and states (for

instance, changes in the tone of voice and facial expressions) to fill the gaps in the emotion's narrative structure of the person we are interested in (Goldie, 1999: 399). To understand Goldie's thesis, take a question such as 'How are you feeling today?'; a person can answer untruthfully, but their bodily changes are more likely to represent their actual emotions and thoughts. In fact, bodily changes are involuntary or occur without conscious awareness; we cannot exercise on them the same control that we may have over the words coming out from our mouth when answering questions regarding how we feel (Goldie, 1999: 400).

Another indispensable factor for the understanding of others' emotions consists in taking into consideration the object that generates that particular emotional reaction, how a person thinks of it, their feelings and desires towards it (Goldie, 1999: 401). All those clues listed by Goldie as necessary to understand another person's emotions and behaviours are part of a holistic interpretation (Goldie, 1999: 402). The more clues we have, the bigger the emotional narrative structure we manage to reconstruct, and the more likely we are to manage to get close to the truth (Goldie, 1999: 403).

Goldie thinks that emotions can be *infectious*, in that one person's emotions can infect another; however, this is not a pre-requisite to understand the emotions felt by others (Goldie, 1999: 404). When a case of emotional contagion takes place, the person infected by the emotions felt by others will not be aware of the contagion; moreover, this experience alone is not sufficient to understand what lies behind the emotion felt by the person at the source of the emotional contagion (Goldie, 1999: 406). We can feel amused, for instance, because we hear the giggles of two people speaking without any information on the topic of their conversation (Goldie, 1999: 407). In this case, we share the laugh with them, but are not aware of its cause.

According to Goldie, there are at least two cases where contagion is not a prerequisite to understanding emotions. The first one is where one can see the situation that causes the

emotional response before the individual who has an emotional reaction to that particular situation. In this case, there is no emotional contagion, because the emotional reaction of the person we are observing has not occurred yet. The second case is when the interaction with another individual is of such a nature (for example, a confrontational interaction) that we can recognise what this person is feeling, but their emotion will not infect us.

In order to better elucidate the latter case, Goldie uses the example of a fight in a bar where the protagonist is a man entering the bar. As an old and weak man enters a bar, he faces an aggressive person with a broken bottle in their hand coming towards him. The elderly man will probably feel fear, and not be infected by the anger and aggression of the other protagonist. A possible explanation, says Goldie, is that the old man first catches his own emotion about the situation, then understands that the person in front of him is angry and aggressive; through deliberation, the old man understands that the other individual is a threat and thus feels fear (Goldie, 1999: 405). Although not emotionally infected by the angry man, the old man recognises the emotion felt by his aggressor and feels fear for what might happen.

5.4.1 Centrally imagining: a guide to others' perspectives

Goldie assesses that, among the different modalities leading to understand others' emotions, only empathy requires assuming the perspective of the person who is the target of our empathy. I will provide additional details regarding how Goldie deems it possible to assume the perspective of others by referring to our ability of centrally imagining.

Goldie believes that empathy is a process enabling human beings to centrally imagine the thoughts, emotions, and feelings of others (Goldie, 1999: 409). The meaning of centrally imagining can only be understood when distinguishing between imagining a situation centrally, acentrally and peripherally. In this regard, Goldie uses the example of a smack of

jellyfish and asks us to visualise a situation where we are sitting at our desk and imagining swimming in waters infested by them or by other vicious creatures (Goldie, 1999: 409-410). Before visualising the situation proposed by Goldie, we must decide which of the three modalities of imagination we are going to use; table 5 recapitulates the possible outcomes depending on which mode we choose.

TABLE 5- The jellyfish scenario

Types of imagination	Key features	Outcomes
Periferically imagining	• We approach the situation from an external point of view; much like when we go to the cinema or to the theatre and watch the actors playing.	• While sitting at our desk, we imagine a smack of jellyfish swimming; • the jellyfish cannot see us and they act as if we were not there to watch.
Acentrally imagining	• We imagine the situation from the perspective of one of the extras; that is, people who have a limited role in the unfolding of the events.	• We pretend to be someone who witnesses the smack of jellyfish swimming without interacting with them; for instance, a witness sitting in a glass bottomed boat who is watching a scuba diver surrounded by jellyfish.
Centrally imagining	• We take part in the situation assuming the role of one of the main protagonists; • We are the ones affected by how the events take place.	• We imagine being the scuba diver in danger because they are surrounded by jellyfish; therefore, we are the ones in danger.

In the first two modalities, periferically and acentrally imagining, the behaviours of the smack of jellyfish do not have any impact on us because we are imagining the situation either from an outside perspective, or from the inside perspective of someone who is not affected by the events. Instead, when we centrally imagine a situation, we assume the perspective of the individuals (or one of the individuals) who are most affected by that situation. From this derives Goldie's thesis that empathy consists in taking the perspective of the person who is the target of our empathy. Empathy involves three elements, which Goldie describes in the following words:

> First, it is necessary for empathy that I be aware of the other as a centre of consciousness distinct from myself. Secondly, it is necessary for empathy that the other should be someone of whom I have a *substantial characterisation*. Thirdly, it is necessary that I have a *narrative* which I can imaginatively enact, with the other as *narrator* (Goldie, 1999: 409).

I will explain this definition by resorting again to the fictitious scene in the bar I outlined earlier. In Goldie's example, an aggressive man with a broken bottle in his hand is threateningly moving towards the old man who just entered the premises. Following Goldie, I can say that if I am sitting in a bar with some friends and I watch the scene, a several things can happen. If I keep watching peripherally, like a witness who is not involved, I will simply see the situation and not be empathically connected with the main protagonists. Instead, if I watch the scene as if I was one of the protagonists and empathise with them, the result will be different. If I imagine being in the position of the old man, I will probably feel fear because of the big aggressive man coming towards me. On the contrary, if I imagine being in the position of the aggressive man I will probably feel anger.

Centrally imagining enacting the narrative, says Goldie, has three consequences. Firstly, we will experience something more vivid than just the simple facts we can deduct by observing the scene; we do not only imagine the reconstruction of the scene, but we live it. We experience the scene, and those imaginary experiences can be a prediction of how we could actually react if something similar happened to us. Secondly, sometimes those imaginary experiences come to life and we find ourselves actually having those experiences when, for example, we have certain emotions and expressive movements associated with a particular scenario (Goldie, 1999: 410). Thus, centrally imagining requires a substantial characterisation. This means that the empath's reconstruction of the scenario involves facts about them, such as for example their character, emotions, mood, etc. (Goldie, 1999: 411). In the example of the bar, when I imagine myself living the same situation as one of the protagonists, I approach that situation putting all of myself into it. Goldie believes that when we feel empathy for someone, we swap positions with them and see specific situations as a real protagonist. The swap does not mean that we completely reset our personality, quite the opposite: those factors that make us a specific individual, distinct from others, determine our

reaction to the situation.

For instance, unlike me, my friend John is not afraid of snakes and one day he is asked to open, in front of me, a box that probably contains one. If empathy just meant reacting to that situation, I should feel as calm as John and not worried in the slightest about the contents of the box as I am not the one opening it. Instead, I find myself being scared and covering my eyes with my hands as if I was the one facing the box. This is because I am imagining myself being in front of the box and not John. The example that I used here could have been used by Goldie, who distinguishes empathy from being in someone else's shoes. For him, the latter means literally trying to think and react like a specific person would if they were in that situation:

> Their distinctness is reflected in the fact that in-his shoes imagining, unlike empathy, involves the narrator having a mixture of my own characterisation and some of his; empathy, if successful, does not involve any aspect of me in this sense, for empathetic understanding is a way of gaining a deeper understanding of what it is like *for him*, not of what it would be like for a person with some mixture of his and my characterisation (Goldie, 1999: 398).

In this passage, Goldie develops a peculiar definition of empathy that is different from that introduced by the aesthetic studies of the XIX century. Goldie believes that we can speak about empathy only if the empath relives a situation as if they were the person experiencing that particular moment. Accordingly, I feel empathy if, when I see or think about my friend John in front of the box that might contain a snake, I act as though I was the one facing that box. I no longer think about what John is thinking or feeling, because I am the one in front of the box.

Empathy and being in the shoes of someone, says Goldie, are two different things. For him, being in the shoes of someone means that, if John is the one facing the box that might contain a snake, I will react as if I were him facing the box. The result of this process will be a mixture of my own feelings and what I believe his feelings to be. My fear of snake means I cannot use my own reaction to reconstruct how John feels in front of the box;

therefore, I will imagine or remember how I react in front of other animals that do not scare me, such as cats. The image of myself in front of a box that might contain a cat depicts the reaction that John might have in front of the box containing a snake. Goldie will say that this example does not represent a successful case of empathy because my own feelings are used to reconstruct what John is feeling. Empathy, for Goldie, succeeds only when I am imagining myself living that situation. Thus, when imagining I am in other people's shoes, there is a mixture of characterisation that is not involved in empathy; Goldie clarifies this aspect with an example:

> That this is so can be seen by the sense of the question: 'What would I do if I were in Bill Clinton's shoes?': the answer need not be 'Obviously, just as Bill Clinton would'; nor need the answer be one which supposes that I, with all my characteristics and woeful ignorance of US politics, am strangely catapulted into Clinton's chair in the Oval Office (Goldie, 1999: 212).

In the case of the box that might contain a snake, I manage to reconstruct what John might be feeling because something similar happened to me. However, this might prove difficult in instances where information is lacking. I use the word 'information' as an umbrella concept to indicate all details, which might be acquired in different ways and are necessary to reconstruct the plausible reaction of someone in a specific situation. Take the example of Bill Clinton. I lack information to be into his shoes: I have never been a president and have no knowledge of US politics or Clinton's personality. It would therefore prove difficult for me to be in his shoes. Difficult, but not impossible, because the gap of information is filled with what I call myself, i.e. my personality, my memories, and my current emotional status. All those details are used by me to fill the information gap in the best way possible and to predict Clinton's reaction.

Goldie's definition of empathy where the empath feels as if they were the person facing a situation by taking the place of that person is very problematic. It is true that empathy makes us feel as if we were the one facing a situation or feeling certain emotions; however, it is not us facing that situation but the person who is the target of our empathy. As soon as

we assume someone else's perspective, we identify with that person. Although this process cannot ever be complete, we use all the tools at our disposal to recreate this perspective. For example, empathising with Bill Clinton would lead to me feeling as though I was him, and not to me pretending to be the President.

Although I agree with the features of being the shoes of someone Goldie advances, I believe his definition of empathy leaves out something important. Indeed, given the way we intend empathy in everyday language and having regard to the aesthetic studies previously quoted, there is an overlap between the aesthetic studies' definition of empathy and Goldie's concept of being in the shoes of someone. In fact, when feeling empathy for someone, we react to the situation experienced by the target of our empathy as if we were the person, which means we *react* as that person would do. In the example above, when I reason as If I was the president, I am not assuming the perspective of the real president who is in charge; therefore, I am not connecting with them. Empathy is about connecting with another person and experiencing what they are feeling, this is a key feature of empathy that is not taken into consideration in Goldie's definition of the term.

5.5 On the distinction between empathy and sympathy

Before I further argue against Goldie's concept of empathy, it is necessary to step back and identify how he uses 'sympathy'; only then will I be in the position to propose my counterargument. Goldie asserts that there is a difference between empathy and sympathy - I will provide a reconstruction of his argumentation and then offer a critique of it.

Goldie's definition of sympathy is as follows:

> An emotional experience, involving recognising another's difficulties, and having feelings of distress about them, as well as being motivated to alleviate those difficulties in some way (Goldie, 1999: 396).

The definition of sympathy proposed by Goldie can be broken into two parts which

correspond to the two principal features of this phenomenon: recognition and action. "Sympathy involves recognition that another person is, in some way, in difficulties"; the term recognition signifies "thoughts that she is now, or is likely to be in the future, suffering physically or emotionally, or that she is, more generally, in some difficulty or other" (Goldie, 1999: 419). Goldie defines sympathy as an 'emotional experience'; the acknowledgment that someone is having difficulties causes in us the arousal of emotions, which are not the same as the ones felt by the person who is the target of our sympathy. He justifies the thesis that sympathy does not involve the sharing of the pain of another individual by asserting that, when we feel sympathy, we care about someone else's feelings but do not share them (Goldie, 1999: 420). In fact, caring for others' feelings is expressed through specific facial expressions and gestures which differ from those used to indicate the sharing of others' feelings (Goldie, 1999: 420).

For Goldie, sympathy as an emotional experience comprises of feelings and thoughts about the person at the root of our sympathy. When we feel sympathy, we often feel other emotions at the same time, such as fear, joy and surprise. However, whereas they all might seem connected, they should be considered as separate phenomena despite the fact they may not always be easily distinguished epistemologically speaking (Goldie, 1999: 419). This is because sympathy does not share the same nature as other types of emotions: it derives from the recognition of someone else's trouble.

Following Goldie's argument, empathy differs from sympathy in a significant way; I will now illustrate the dissimilarity through an example. Say a friend has been cheated on by their spouse with their best friend. If we react to the news with empathy, we will centrally imagine ourselves living that situation. How will we feel if our spouse cheated on us with our best friend? Would we forgive them, or despise them forever? Those are probably the kinds of questions we would attempt to answer to picture ourselves in that situation. Thus, if the topic

is sensitive for us, we might react as if our spouse really cheated on us; we might feel mad, sad, or even start to cry because the reconstruction of this hypothetical situation has assumed a vivid colour, almost real. Instead, in the case of sympathy we would probably try to understand why our friend is arguing with their spouse and, after discovering the betrayal, we would try to console our friend and help them to get over this terrible moment in their life. Sympathy might cause in us the arousal of emotions such as sadness or anger, but those emotions should be interpreted as the result of our caring for our friend, not of our sharing the pain they are experiencing. Our reaction would be yet again different if, instead of using empathy or sympathy, we approached our friend's issue through what Goldie identifies as being in the shoes of someone else. In this case, we would pretend or enact the situation as if we were our friend; therefore, we would use all the information available to reconstruct our friend's perspective and determine their feelings and thoughts. For Goldie, this experience does not cause the arousal of emotions for our friend or with regards to the situation.

I provide below a table of the different modalities through which we understand or react to others' emotions as identified by Goldie. This recapitulation will be beneficial in understanding the differences between emotions, in particular the distinction between empathy and sympathy which I will discuss in the following section.

TABLE 6- Understanding others' emotions and thoughts

Modalities	Key features
Contagion	• *Infected* by others' emotions, that is sharing the affective side of others' emotions without being aware of doing so; • this experience alone is not sufficient to understand what is behind the emotion felt by the person or people who are the source of the emotional contagion. For instance, we feel amused by the giggles of two people speaking without knowing the subject of their conversation.
Contagion absent	• Understanding others' emotions without being physically affected by them. There are two possible circumstances where this can occur: ▪ Having the opportunity to understand the situation that causes the emotional response before the individual emotionally reacts to that situation. In this case, there is no emotional contagion, because the emotional reaction of the person we are observing has not occurred yet.

	▪ The interaction with another individual is of such a nature (for example, a confrontational interaction) that we can recognise what this person is feeling without their emotion infecting us.
Empathy	• Centrally imagining a situation while assuming the role of one of the main protagonists; • We are the one affected by how the events take place. For instance, we empathise with our friend who was cheated on by their spouse and imagine what we would do if this happened to us.
Being in the shoes of someone else	• Imagining a situation while enacting the role of one of the main protagonists; • That is, using the information in our possession to recreate what the other person feels and think. For instance, we are in the shoes of our friend when we imagine what they feel and think regarding their spouse's betrayal.
Sympathy	• Recognising the difficulties experienced by someone while having feelings of distress; subsequently, acting upon those feelings with the purpose of improving the situation of the person who is the target of our sympathy. • For instance, at the news of our friend being cheated on, we experience sadness and consequentially attempt to console them.

5.5.1 Against Goldie use of empathy and sympathy

In this section, I will argue against Goldie's conceptions of empathy and sympathy and propose my own definition of the two terms, the validity and applicability of which will be put to the test in the following chapters.

In table 6, I proposed a summary of the different modalities through which we understand others' emotions and thoughts according to Goldie's philosophy. The description of the phenomena offered by Goldie and, in particular, that of empathy and sympathy differs from the one developed by the aesthetics of the XIX century. Despite the different explanations presented in the literature regarding how empathy operates, there is a common agreement that sympathy and empathy are the same thing. Empathy or sympathy arises when an individual projects their own self into another object; this object can be an animate thing, an animal or another being. As a result, the individual experiences the same emotions as the target of their empathy or sympathy. On the contrary, Goldie uses the concepts of sympathy and empathy to indicate two separate experiences that do not involve assuming the perspective of another being. Thus, he attributes an ethical dimension to sympathy that consists in being affectively moved by the situation of the target our sympathy, and acting

with the purpose of alleviating their suffering.

The definition of empathy and the differences between empathy and sympathy proposed by Goldie present several downsides. My first concern is the meaning of empathy as the ability to react to a situation as if we replaced the person in that specific situation. In the XIX century, the aesthetic discipline expressed the need for a word designating the relationship existing between a viewer and a piece of art. I explained this relationship resorting to the image of a stream in section 5.3.1: empathy is much akin to a strong stream flowing from the empath into a target; this is a steam that does not stop its journey inside the target but it is so powerful that it splashes back at the empath. The person who feels empathy does not replace the target, as Goldie says, but interacts with it taking as much as they can from it and using the information deriving from this interaction to reconstruct and enact the situation.

A similar process can be found in Goldie's research, but it is addressed with another name: being in the shoes of someone else. I believe that Goldie's idea of being in the shoes of someone is more linked to the concept of empathy formulated in the XIX century; we do not replace the individual for whom we feel empathy, but instead react as if we were that specific person. If I am in the shoes of someone I cannot completely reset myself, but who I am is what allows me to become someone else. Therefore, if we slightly change Goldie's concept of being in the shoes of someone, we can acquire a definition of empathy that might work. Empathy – or being in the shoes of someone for Goldie – consists in recognising and experiencing what other people are feeling in a given situation; we become that specific person who is facing that situation (see for example the case of *The Empath* in Star Trek). Imagining ourselves in the situation of someone cannot be considered as empathy because we are not taking the perspective of another individual; we are replacing them and completely resetting their persona.

My second concern is about the meaning of sympathy as expressed by Goldie: sympathy

is to recognise that someone has difficulties and try to help that individual to overcome them. Goldie believes that sympathy does not require taking the perspective of someone and feeling empathy for them. This might be true in certain circumstances: for instance, if our friend needs a loan we might try to help and give them some money without feeling empathy for them. Goldie would say that in this case we acted pushed by a sentiment of sympathy; nevertheless, we cannot generalise that sympathy does not need empathy or that it does not derive from it simply from this example. Moreover, Goldie establishes an unbreakable connection between sympathy and ethic: when we feel sympathy, we act in a good way towards a person in distress. However, experience teaches us that we do not always act in a good manner towards people who are in distress but that, quite the opposite, we ignore their suffering or worst act with the aim of aggravating their condition.

I agree with Goldie that empathy and sympathy indicate different processes, but I disagree with the meaning he ascribes to the concepts of empathy and sympathy. Taking in to account the aesthetic literature of the XIX century and the empirical materials that will be presented in chapter VI, I propose that empathy is the experience of being in the shoes of someone else and react as if we were that specific person, reconstructing the perspective of someone and assuming that perspective. Empathy does not mean erasing ourselves completely, because it is through who we are that we manage to reconstruct someone else's perspective and fill the informational gaps necessary to do so. Through empathy, we do not only grab what others feel and think, we also feel the other person; in this regard, empathy is a connection (physical and mental) between us and the target of our empathy.

It is useful to compare Goldie's account of empathy and sympathy with the accounts recently developed by other philosophers. For instance, Derek Matravers offers a description of empathy that contains all three elements generally considered as features of empathy as I identified them in section 5.3.1 and is compatible with my critique of Goldie. Matravers

asserts that we empathise with someone when we use our imagination as an instrument through which to adopt the perspective of others with the purpose of grasping what the other person feels. In this process, we simulate what the target is experiencing: "we use our own minds as a model of other minds" (Matravers, 20017:15). Therefore, if empathy involves reconstruction and simulation of what the target feels, when we feel empathy for them we imagine we are them and not ourselves while facing the same situation as the target. While criticising the work of H. L. Maibom (2014), Matravers adds that, when we feel empathy, we feel the same emotions as the target, but it is not appropriate to say that we are feeling an emotion for them (Matravers, 20017:78). "In empathising with someone who is distressed, we do not come to feel distress for that person. Rather, we come to feel *distressed* alongside that person" (Matravers, 20017:78-79). This distinction proposed by Matravers is fundamental to understanding the difference between empathy and sympathy. Only in the case of sympathy does the target's situation cause the arousal of compassion, which then pushes us to assist them to overcome their difficulties. Empathy and sympathy are then two different experiences, although sympathy and the actions deriving from it can in some cases originate in empathy.

Let us consider another account. Much like Matravers, Amy Coplan asserts that empathy is not a case of self-perspective taking; her theory is based on a differentiation between empathy and pseudo-empathy. She refers to 'pseudo-empathy' to indicate the tentative to assume someone's perspective by picturing how we ourselves would react if we were in the target's situation (Coplan, 2011:54). This process is called 'pseudo-sympathy' because it can lead to quasi-empathic experiences when there is an overlap between our reaction and that of the target, or when the situation in question is of such type as to determine a universal response (Coplan, 2011:54). For instance, when Jane imagines being in the same situation as Dick, who is followed by a lion, they might experience the same reaction to that situation;

in this case, there is an overlap between Jane's and Dick's experience (Coplan, 2011:54). Coplan states that we are by nature subject to an egocentric bias (our own perspective is used to imagine what others feel and think). Therefore, we have difficulties abandoning our own values, beliefs and occurrent states to assume the someone else's perspective (Coplan, 2011:55-56). However, the use of self-perspective to determine what others are going through leads to pseudo-empathy because, although we believe we understand others, we are not accessing their point of view.

As defined by Coplan, through 'empathy' "an observer simulates another's situated psychological states, while maintaining clear self–other differentiation" (Coplan, 2011:58). Sympathy occurs after empathy and is *a feeling of concern about* and a *reaction towards* what others are experiencing; it leads to actions aimed at improving the situation of the target. For instance, in the case of *The Empath* of Star Trek, empathy takes place when Gem takes the perspective of Kirk and connects with him, while sympathy occurs when Gem heals Kirk's wounds. However, sympathy does not always derive from empathy and there are circumstances where the concern towards others does not require the feeling of empathy. Take, for example, the case of a doctor that recognises the symptoms of their patient and gives them appropriate care; here the doctor does not feel like their patients and yet assists them to improve their health. Both Gem's and the doctor's actions are the result of sympathy; however, only Gem feels empathy because she feels the same as the other person and connects with them on a physical and mental level.

In chapter VI and in chapter VII, I will further clarify the role of sympathy and argue that there are two types of sympathy: good and evil sympathy. While good sympathy consists in actions that aim at improving the condition of someone, evil sympathy will impair a person's condition. Both types of sympathy used here by way of example are based on empathy, through which we understand and assume the perspective of another person. My division of

sympathy in good and evil provides an explanation for those cases where we do not act with the aim of relieving people from their suffering. Ethical actions do not always derive from sympathy: instead of using her empathy to heal Kirk, Gem could have chosen to make his condition worst. The above definitions should be considered as preliminary because their content will be further discussed in the following chapters, where I will assess whether they can be used to discuss and solve other issues at the heart of philosophy.

5.6 Summary

I offered a preliminary definition of both empathy and sympathy. Following Lange's methodology, I traced back the conductive wire that connects the use of those terms in sci-fi literature, everyday language and in the scientific literature. This allowed me to identify a meaning of empathy and sympathy with a solid foundation and to reduce the grey areas that generally afflict the use of those terms. My assertions are solid because based on both philosophical and empirical literature, and on the premise that reaching a better understanding of a researched phenomenon requires using all available instruments, even those generally considered a prerogative of other disciplines.

Moreover, my reference to both sci-fi and Goldie's theory and my comparing Goldie's acocunt of empathy with other influential philosophical accounts has helped me determine the difference between empathy and other types of experience that allow us to understand others' emotions and thoughts. It appears that empathy is the only emotional experience through which we *connect* with another person; we use all the information at our disposal and, in some cases, resort to guesses to determine what another person is going through. As a result, we feel connected with them because we experience what they are experiencing. Two types of actions derive from empathy: a) good sympathy when we use the information

acquired thanks to empathy to act in favour of the subject of our empathy; b) evil sympathy when we act with the aim of impairing their condition.

Chapter VI

Is empathy an emotion?

6.1 Introduction

Having proposed a definition of empathy in the previous chapter, I will now focus on empathy again with the aim of establishing whether it displays the same features as an emotion. I will begin by enquiring on the nature of empathy and argue that, although the literature on the topic roughly agrees on how it operates, disagreement remains rife regarding the classification of empathy. As the nature of empathy is not undisputed, it seems necessary to take a step back and investigate first and foremost what happens when we feel empathy.

To determine the features of empathy, I will refer to a *hybrid theory* which makes use of both philosophical and empirical literature to reach a better understanding of empathy. I will argue that empathy features two components: cognitive and physical changes. This distinction is an explanatory one, aimed at clarifying what occurs cognitively and physically when we feel empathy. In reality, there is no neat way of telling cognitive and physical changes apart: they affect each other and it is the interaction between them that determines the arousal of empathy.

Once I have established how empathy arises and operates, I will argue that the definition of empathy I proposed in chapter V is compatible with the current philosophical and empirical literature. This will lead me to the conclusion that the features of empathy outlined here constitute a positive ground to assert that empathy is, indeed, an emotion.

6.2 What is the nature of empathy?

I will now explore the nature of empathy by comparing and commenting on several definitions of empathy as they appear in the scientific literature. From this brief review, it will emerge that, although the definitions proposed differ concerning the nature of empathy, they roughly concur on the process involved in its arousal.

In the scientific literature, most definitions of empathy begin with 'empathy is', followed by one or more key words used to describe the content of the concept. The keywords most used to describe the nature of empathy are 'emotion' or 'emotional response' (Boler, 1997; Spiro, 2009; Roth-Hananiaa et al., 2011), 'skill' (Keefe, 1976; Zeidner et al., 2004; Yilmaz, 2007; Goldstein and Winner, 2012), 'ability' (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Riggio and Reichard, 2008; Light et al., 2009) and, occasionally, other keywords such as 'personal trait' or 'stabile ability' (Feshbach, 1975; Sawyer, 1975; Buie, 1981; Georgi et al., 2014).

Below is an example of two definitions which, although in disagreement on the nature of empathy, propose a similar account of empathy's function:

> Empathy refers to the capacity to understand and respond to the unique affective experiences of another person (Decety and Jackson, 2004; Batson et al., 1987) (Lamm et al., 2007: 42).

> Empathy is a vicarious socio-emotional response that is induced by the perception of another individual's affective state. It entails feeling an emotion that is similar to the one likely experienced by the other person (Batson, 2009; Decety and Meyer, 2008; Einsenberg et al., 2006; Preston and Waal, 2002; Thompson, 1987) (Roth-Hananiaa et al., 2011: 448).

My selection of these quotes is motivated by the fact that, although they use a different language, both quotes have similar content and state that empathy responds to other individuals' experience and emotions. The similarity in these quotes can be traced back to: (a) the use of 'response' to indicate what empathy does; and (b) the reference to the same empirical studies (see the reference to the work of C. Daniel Batson and Jean Decety for an example in this matter) as a guarantee of the validity of the definition proposed.

However, in the case of the two definitions of empathy above, while the authors share views about what empathy does, they disagree on its nature. One description states that empathy is an *emotion*, whilst the other considers it to be a *skill*. How could empathy possibly be a skill and an emotion at the same time? There are two possible answers. The first is that the terms 'skill' and 'emotion' are synonymous and refer to the same phenomenon by different concepts; but this would only sound true in the case of empathy and not in other contexts, as we do not use the two terms as synonymous either in everyday contexts or in scientific contexts. The second explanation is that, in the two definitions above, the keywords associated with empathy are chosen inaccurately, perhaps because those definitions are meant just as a preliminary and imprecise description of what empathy is.

Consider now another definition of empathy that differs from the ones above in that it does not concern itself with the nature of empathy:

> Empathy has been variously conceptualised as a behaviour, a personality dimension, or as an experienced emotion. Much of this confusion can be seen as arising from the fact that empathy is both a complex process (i.e. a multi-dimensional, multi-phase construct that has several components) and a concept whose meaning continues to evolve (Mercer and Reynolds, 2002: 10).

Here, the authors state that empathy has been defined in several ways (a behaviour, an emotion or a personal trait) and the disagreement in the definition of empathy derives from two reasons: (a) empathy is a process made up of several components; (b) the concept of empathy is still in evolution. This definition *plays safe*; it acknowledges that various definitions of empathy's nature have been proposed without supporting one of them or advocating for a new one. Thus, on the one hand, this definition is beneficial to the understanding of empathy because it highlights the grey areas affecting the use of the term 'empathy'; on the other hand, however, it does not solve the issue of how empathy should be defined.

Empathy is indeed a complex phenomenon that researchers are still trying to explain and define. However, the main issue remains that whilst empathy has generally been described as a skill or an emotion, this choice of words has hardly ever been followed by a careful justification of the classification employed. Thus, there is a need for a reasoned justification for a classification for empathy as either a skill or an emotion. Finding such a justification requires to first determine what happens physically and mentally when we feel empathy, and subsequently to employ the features identified to establish which category empathy belongs to.

6.2.1 Cognitive and affective empathy

Before determining what happens when we feel empathy, I will make a distinction between cognitive and affective empathy. As asserted in chapter V, empathy consists in feeling and 'recognising' what other human and non-human animals are experiencing; the empath shares a connection with the target of their empathy and feel as if they were impersonating (or simulating) the target. I used the expression 'recognising' in quote marks because, in the case of empathy, recognising another being's feelings does not entail a pure cognitive evaluation, but an ensemble of cognitions and feelings. Thus, 'as if they were the target' stands in this case for the fact that the empath uses what is available to them in order to reconstruct the target's perspective and, therefore, feel as if they were them.

Empathy is grounded in human and non-human animals since birth, but the extent of empathy and the intensity in the range of empathy depend on the individual experiencing it. In this case, the word 'extent' refers to the empath feeling empathy through targets (things, situations, people, animals, etc.) close to them; this attachment can be physical or emotional. Instead, the term 'intensity' relates to: a) how strong the connection with the target is; b)

how much information about the target we can obtain. Thus, empathy can be reinforced through education, making it easy to recognise and reinforce.

Empathy is often divided into affective or emotional empathy (the sharing of emotions and feelings) and cognitive empathy (mental perspective-taking) (Smith, 2006: 3). In social psychology, three elements are generally studied by those interested in emotional empathy: a) feeling what the person who is the target of our empathy is feeling; b) personal distress, i.e. the feelings of distress that arise in response our perception of someone's perspective - this can mirror or differ from the emotion felt by the target; c) compassion or empathic concern for the target (Hodges and Myers, 2007: 296). Instead, cognitive empathy refers to the degree to which we perceive that we have positively guessed someone's feelings and thoughts; this type of empathy does not entail any reference to compassion for the target, and cognitive empathy can therefore be used to harm others (Hodges and Myers, 2007: 297).

Recent studies speculate that cognitive and affective empathy are two different (albeit connected) systems which, together, constitute what we generally define as empathy. For instance, studies conducted on people suffering with brain injuries or personality disorders show that there are cases where only one of the two types of empathy is impaired (Shamay-Tsoory, 2011: 18-19). I will further develop my reasoning on the deficiency of cognitive and affective empathy in chapter VII, where I will use several empirical studies and speculate that different brain areas are involved in the arousal of empathy and that, when one or more of them is compromised, the empathy felt is also impaired.

In this chapter and the following ones, I will not further discuss or justify the distinction between cognitive and affective aspects of empathy, but I will use the distinction to better understand empathy's two major constituents: physical changes and cognition. As opposed to my discussion in chapter VII, where I report and examine empirical studies about empathy

being compromised due to physical or mental illness, I am here taking into consideration the empathy felt by subjects who are wholly able to experience this phenomenon.

6.3 The physical component

I will first examine the physical component of empathy and then direct my attention to its cognitive aspect. I will begin with an account of the mirror neuron system in monkeys and then proceed with clarifying the differences between the mirror neurons in monkeys and in human beings. I will then justify the importance of the discovery of mirror neurons in understanding empathy by referring to the works of Vittorio Gallese and Damasio.

Mirror neurons belong to the visuomotor neurons category and were discovered for the first time in the area F5 of monkeys' premotor cortex (PmC). There are two major theories regarding the role played by mirror neurons in monkeys. The first argues that mirror neurons "activate the imitative process", while the second asserts that those neurons "are the basis of action understanding" (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 172).

Each time a monkey sees a human or a non-human animal interacting with an object, the neurons, whose function is to represent that action, are activated in the monkey's premotor cortex. The motor representation caused by the sight of an action triggers the same bodily reactions as those which would be active if the monkey was executing the action himself. Moreover, the mirror neurons transform the visual information into knowledge; if the monkeys see an action, they are capable of learning how to reproduce that action (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 172).

Experiments have been performed to prove the existence of the mirror neuron system in monkeys and its role in understanding actions performed by others, and I will refer to two of those experiments in greater detail. In the first, the monkeys are put in a condition where they cannot see but only listen to the action taking place; in the second experiment, the

monkeys are divided into two groups, with one unable to see the entirety of the action taking place. In a condition of deprivation of sight, the activity of mirror neurons in monkeys is tested to verify whether the mirror neurons in areas F5 can recognise and understand an action by its sound, and if the mental representation of an action can cause the activation of those neurons (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 173). The experiment of deprivation of sight shows that 15% of the mirror neurons that respond to actions followed by sound also become active in cases where only the sound of the action is perceived (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 173).

The objective of the second experiment was to determine whether the mirror neurons of monkeys are active when a monkey does not see the whole action taking place but has enough information to create a mental representation of that action. The monkeys were divided into two groups: one in 'full vision' condition (a complete action directed at an object) and one in 'hidden' condition (the final part of the action hidden). In the experiment, a scientist placed a piece of food behind a screen, with the full vision group seeing the scientist hide the food behind the screen, while the hidden condition group only saw the scientist hiding the food but not the final spot where the food was placed. The result of the experiment shows that, in the hidden condition, the monkeys' mirror neurons become active when the action undertaken by the scientist was understood. More than half of the neurons examined were active in a situation of hidden condition and, among those active neurons, half did not show any difference in the strength of their response in comparison to the same neurons in full vision condition.

Thus, both experiments show that the activation of mirror neurons in monkeys is connected to the ability of understanding the action taking place. The sight of an observed action is important to activate the mirror neurons only if the sight contributes to understanding the action observed. Therefore, the mirror neurons can discharge without the

visual stimuli provided other stimuli, such as sounds, make the understanding of an observed action possible (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 173-174).

6.3.1 Mirror neurons in human animals

Monkeys are not the only animal equipped with mirror neurons. Human animals, too, possess this type of neurons. The activity of the mirror neurons in the motor system of human beings has been recorded in different experiments, and the most direct type of evidence has been provided by studies involving transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 175). TMS is a non-invasive technique used to electrically stimulate the nervous system. In the case of mirror neurons, TMS is applied to the motor cortex, which is subject to a stimulation of appropriate intensity. The result of this stimulation permits the documentation of the motor-evoke potential from the contralateral extremity muscles (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 175). The motor-evoke potential are the neurological signals sent by the peripheral muscles and spinal cord when the brain is stimulated. Luciano Fadiga, for instance, applied the TMS to record the changes occurring in the right hand and arm muscles when the left motor cortex is electrically stimulated. The subjects of the experiment observe the person carrying out the experiment grasping objects with their hand or moving their arm without a purpose; the result of the sight of those actions shows an increase of the motor evoke potential in the muscles the volunteers use to reproduce the movements of the experimenter (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 175). Thus, when a person observes another individual in action, the observation of this movement causes an excitation in the muscles of the viewer, as well as in those usually responsible for making that specific movement possible. Several studies show that, when an individual observes another one performing an action, this observation causes the activation of a complex network constituted by occipital, temporal and parietal visual areas, and two other cortical regions

whose function is predominantly motor. Those cortical regions are the rostral part of the inferior parietal lobule, the lower part of the pre-central gyrus and the posterior part of the inferior frontal gyrus; those regions should be addressed as the core of the human mirror neuron system (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 176).

The experiments carried out with the TMS technique show that humans have a mirror neuron system which, when active, contributes to excite body areas involved in the execution of an observed movement. Both monkeys and human beings possess a mirror neuron system; however, the one present in human beings exhibits peculiar properties compared to that of monkeys. In monkeys, mirror neurons become active only when the actor observed interacts with an object; instead, in humans, intransitive meaningless movement (that is, without the interaction with an object) can activate the mirror neurons system. Thus, in monkeys, the mirror neurons are active only in the presence of an action, while in humans they are not only active when the action observed is performed, but also when the actor observed is performing movements to prepare themselves to act (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004: 176).

Summing up:

> Humans have a 'mirror matching system' similar to that originally discovered in monkeys. Whenever we are looking at someone performing an action, beside the activation of various visual areas, there is a concurrent activation of the motor circuits that are recruited when we ourselves perform that action. Although we do not overtly reproduce the observed action, nevertheless our motor system becomes active *as if* we were executing that very same action that we are observing. To spell it out in different words, action observation implies action *simulation* (Gallese, 2001: 37).

The author of this passage, Gallese, borrows the expression 'as if' from Damasio (Gallese, 2001: 37). With his concept of 'as if body loop', Damasio develops a hypothesis very similar to that of the mirror neurons which has already briefly been developed in chapter III. Damasio says that human beings have two internal mechanisms: the body loop and the as if body loop; those mechanisms are responsible for the bodily and cognitive changes that take place when the neural structure located in the subcortical section of the brain becomes active

(Damasio, [1999]2000: 79-80). The activation of the neurons located in the subcortical area is due to the encounter with another object that stimulates their activity; this causes the changes that we generally define as emotions. The body loop consists of humoral signs activated when an emotion arises; the humoral signs can be divided as follows: the chemical messages submitted through the blood stream, and the neural signals, i.e. the electrochemical messages sent via nerve pathways. Instead, the as if body loop stands for the changes occurring in the sensory map; the result of these changes is a feeling of physical change happening to our body. This is a *virtual feeling* because the body is not changing in reality (Damasio, [1999]2000: 79-80). The as if body loop proposed by Damasio works in both human beings and monkeys, and this mechanism assumes the existence of mirror neurons in both species; the as if body loop can therefore be considered as a variation of the mirror neurons hypothesis.

In fact, Damasio writes:

> The result of different simulation of body states in body-sensing regions is no different from that of filtering of signals hailing from the body. In both cases the brain momentarily creates a set of body maps that does not correspond exactly to the current reality of the body. The brain uses the incoming body signals like clay to sculpt a particular body state in the regions where such a pattern can be constructed, i.e., the body-sensing regions. What one feels then is based on the 'false' construction, not on the "real" body state (Damasio, 2003: 216).

The as if body loop and the mirror neurons system are both hypotheses that suggest that human beings, but also monkeys, reproduce or mimic an action observed without actually moving. Possessing this kind of system confers an advantage to those who own it, as it allows them to "understand the behaviour exposed by other individuals" (Gallese, 2001: 39). Gallese's theory claims that 'understanding' is a process that relies "on a neural mechanism that matches, in the same neuronal substrate, the observed behaviour with the one executed" (Gallese, 2001: 39).

Moreover, as the same body regions are active when performing or observing a specific action, there might be a link that connects action control and action (Gallese, 2001: 39). In

this regard, Gallese believes that the activity of the mirror neuron system can be interpreted as an efference copy of the motor signal, which is activated by the observation of an action. When an action and the elements composing it are elaborated by the nervous system in the best motor programme finalised to its reproduction, a copy of this programme or signal is sent to the mirror neurons system (Gallese, 2001: 39).

Thus, Gallese speculates that the mirror neuron system might be the product of an evolutionary process designed to achieve a better control of action performance: therefore, this system does not only copy other people's individual actions, but also our own, allowing us to perform better. Mirror neurons can contribute to improving a gesture observed when a person performing the action is the same as that observing the movement. The same action can be generalised as a movement that human beings can perform, and that is understood by the observer when executed by others.

The mirror neuron system has implications that go further than the ability to mimic an action observed without actually executing it; somehow it is able to connect an individual with another. Following this hypothesis, it is possible to extend the power of mirror neurons to other elements observable in third parties; we do not simply register and copy an action but observe its details and particularities. For example, understanding an action requires being informed of its purpose and reason, the movement, the context, the emotions and thoughts involved, etc. Mirror neurons contribute to the collection of that information with a view to simulate the action and give the observer an inner point of view on what is happening. I observe the action and reproduce it as if I was the person performing that gesture.

The mirror neuron system's main function consists in promoting learning through imitation, a hypothesis that finds confirmation in the learning process of a new motor skill. For instance, when an individual is learning a new movement, the first phase of the process

consists in trying to replicate the movements of an observed instructor (Gallese and Goldman, 1998: 495). However, this system has another key function: mind reading; that is, "the activity of representing specific mental states of others, for example, their perceptions, goals, beliefs, expectations, and the like" (Gallese and Goldman, 1998: 495). Both functions are useful to the survival of human beings. In fact, identifying what lies behind the behaviours of another individual, for example their inner state and goals, can assist in predicting a person's future actions and influence our own behaviour in light of their cooperative, non-cooperative or threatening character (Gallese and Goldman, 1998: 496).

6.4 The cognitive component

In this section, I will further explore the role of mind reading in empathy. I will begin by investigating the different types of mind reading and determine which may be responsible for empathy; I will then focus on those aspects that are fundamental to reconstructing the perspective of others.

In the literature, the subject of mind reading is dominated by three theories: the rational theory (RT), theory theory (TT) and simulation theory (ST). The RT states that individuals attribute a mental state to others by using principles of rationality. People presuppose that others are rational in terms of beliefs, preferences and decision-making and, when reading the mind of others, put together the initial information on the status of the target according to principles of rationality. This information is used to establish the subsequent mental state a person would rationally adopt in the given circumstances, and this mental state is then attributed to the target (Shanton and Goldman, 2010: 527). This process, often called 'intentional stance' or 'teleological stance' might be useful when one does not know the target well, as the only way to proceed in this case is to assume that a person will act reasonably. It is also true that species, in general, tend to react in similar ways; however, the

mental state in question, culture, personality and previous experiences of the target can lead to significant variations in the subsequent mental state.

The TT argues that the mental states of other beings are not directly observable; human beings achieve mind-reading through the development of a common-sense theory of the mind which is similar to scientific theory (Gallese and Goldman, 1998: 496). Some believe that children develop a theory of mind through the same empirical and testing methods as those adopted by professional scientists during the formulation of their theories. For others, the basics of our theory of mind are innate and emerge through experience during the early years (Shanton and Goldman, 2010: 527). In this model, every person possesses a set of causal/explanatory laws (much like the laws we use to predict physical phenomenon) and those laws are used to link external stimuli to certain mental states, certain mental states to other mental states and certain mental states to specific behaviours (Gallese and Goldman, 1998: 527). In other words, "if A is in states S1, S2, S3, etc., and conditions C1, C2, C3 obtain, then A will (or will probably do) *X*" (Gordon, 1986: 159-160). In this regard, the TT is very similar to the RT: while the RT uses the principles of rationality, the TT follows specific causal/explanatory laws. Both TT and RT suffer the same limitations because their predictive reliability is only based on the amount of information we have about the target; the more information we have, the higher the chances of our predictions coming true (Gordon, 1986: 360).

In the ST, an individual represents and predicts the mental states of others by simulation, that is the use of our own mental mechanism to predict and calculate the mental process behind the action observed (Gallese and Goldman, 1998: 496). Mind-reading does not necessitate psychological laws because we read the mind of other beings by simulating their behaviour and recreating what is behind what we observe. Some believers of the ST assert

that several of the concepts of mental states we use to predict the mental states of others are profoundly linked with our possession of those mental states (Cruz and Gordon, 2006: 9).

Mental state simulation can be of two types: intrapersonal or interpersonal. The former is a self-directed simulation, for instance, trying to reproduce or re-experience an image when visualising something in our mind. The latter is an other-directed simulation; for instance, in the case of empathy we simulate what someone else is experiencing (Shanton and Goldman, 2010: 529). Robert M. Goldon illustrates the difference between intrapersonal and interpersonal simulation by using the example of a chess game. We can speak of intrapersonal simulation when the player, aiming at deciding their next move, simulates a chess game played previously in their life and presenting the same (or similar) characteristics as the one currently played. Instead, interpersonal simulation occurs when the player aiming at deciding the other player's next move assumes that other player's perspective. For instance, they can simulate a lower level of play and pretend that they do not know what their own intentions are (Gordon, 1986: 162).

As opposed to the previous models of mind-reading, the SR focuses on an individual's specificity in the mind-reading process. Two different individuals do not read the mind of a third one in the same way, and might also arrive at the same conclusion in different ways. In fact, when we read the mind of another individual, we make use of all information in our possession to simulate that mind, which includes our specificities (personality, memories, believes, culture, etc.) as an individual who differs from others. In the SR, there is a match or correspondence between the mental activity of one person and another who is the target of the simulation; the only difference between the two mental activities is that the former makes use of 'pretend states' rather than 'natural states' (Gallese and Goldman, 1998: 497). It is plausible that the simulation of the reasons for an action undertaken by another being is enabled by the activation of the mirror neuron system (Gallese and Goldman, 1998: 497). In

fact, in human beings, the neuron mirror system facilitates the reproduction of the movement observed and the person observing the action experiences similar mental events to those experienced by the target (Gallese and Goldman, 1998: 497).

6.4.1 Simulation in empathy

Given the role of the mirror neuron system in the mind-reading process and the simulation and reproduction of an observed action, it is plausible to support the position that the mirror neuron system is active when we feel empathy. What follows is a discussion on the role of both simulation and mirror neuron system in empathy.

If empathy consists in physically connecting people and understanding another person's actions, the mirror neuron system should be considered as one of the contributing factors to experiencing empathy (Gallese, 2001: 42-43; Gallese, 2003: 176; Iacoboni, 2009: 665). In empathy, "we perceive and experience an emotion while knowing it is not us who are having the emotion. In empathy, we are directed towards the experiences of other people" (Ingerslev, 2013: 203). Thus, when we feel empathy for someone, we assume the perspective of the person facing a specific problem and acting in a given way. More than simply mimicking the body posture of the observed action (see for instance, the definition of contagion proposed by Goldie as discussed in chapter V), when we feel empathy we also feel what the other person feels and understand the reasons that lead to them feeling that way.

Studies such as the mirror neuron system and the as if body loop conjecture the existence of a system that becomes active when the empath has a perceptual contact with the target. Their hypothesis seems to be convincing as it offers a plausible explanation for those circumstances where the interaction with another individual arouses in us the same emotions as those felt by the target of our empathy. Moreover, when combined with the *ST* of mind-

reading, the system in question provides an insight into what happens when we simulate what others experience and think in order to understand what lies behind specific behaviours observed.

Although the studies discussed in this chapter all refer to a neurological system able to *resonate* what others feel while we observe them, I speculate that something is also active when we do not observe the target of our empathy. This supposition is the boldest aspect of my speculation and relies on two main reasons. The first consists in the fact that observation alone does not suffice to cause empathy for an observed target. The emotion of empathy is constituted of the work of the mirror neuron system, which physically reproduces the emotions and sensations felt by the target into the body of the empath, but also the *cognitive* elements that are necessary to fully reconstruct the target's perspective. In this case, the term 'cognitive' indicates all the information necessary to the reconstruction of the perceived action.

The second reason is that our mind can imagine and reproduce an object's features without observing it. The same is true for other individuals' behaviours; take for instance the attachment we often have to fictional characters in novels: we do not perceive the fictional characters, yet can feel empathy for them. If this is true, it can also be that there are circumstances where we indirectly perceive another person and still manage to reconstruct how they feel. It should be emphasised that, in the case of fictional characters, their creators generally provide us with the information necessary to simulate what the fictional characters feel and think by describing in detail elements such as personality, past experiences, situations and context, etc. Therefore, feeling empathy and assuming someone's perspective can be achieved even when the person who is the target of our empathy is not physically in front of us, provided we have sufficient information to reconstruct their perspective.

6.5 Grasp the other: information is necessary

As stated above, feeling empathy requires having information about the person who is the target of our empathy; we reconstruct and then assume their perspective on the basis of this information. I will establish what the necessary information consists in, and how the absence or inaccuracy of information impacts empathy.

I have distinguished the type of information necessary to reconstruct the perspective of another person into three different groups (table 7); the subsequent use of an example involving these three groups will assist in determining whether they are fit to describe what information plays a role in the arousal of empathy.

TABLE 7- Grasp the information

Group	Key Features
Grasp the other	• Includes all the information essential to reconstructing the features that characterise the other person and their action. Those details can be subdivided into: ▪ physical (body movements, posture, facial expressions, tone of voice etc.); ▪ mental (memories, experiences, desires, beliefs, personality traits etc.).
Grasp the context	• Includes all the information essential to reconstructing the context and the situation in which the individual acts and their relation with it (the place, the time, people involved and their role in the facts, etc.).
Grasp the relation between the empath and the other	• Includes all the details necessary to establishing the nature of the connection between the empath and their target before empathy takes place. There are three types of connections: ▪ physical connection, a connection based on the physical proximity between the empath and the target; ▪ affective connection, an affective relationship already established with someone before empathy takes place (for instance, the ones we have with family and friends); ▪ condition connection, the dynamic of the action and the context in which it takes place remind us of past experiences and connect us more strongly than ordinary with the target.

I used the verb 'grasp' in relation to the English translation of *On the Problem of Empathy* (PhD dissertation 1916) by Edith Stein (1891-1942), who asserts that empathy "has to deal with the grasping" (Stein, [1916]1989: 7), referring to the fact that, when we feel empathy, we *grasp* what others feel and think and reconstruct how those emotions and thoughts manifest themselves.

The information collected in those three groups is the base of the evaluative judgment(s) about the target of our empathy and gives rise to the physical changes that simulate what the target is experiencing. I use 'evaluative judgment' to indicate the cognitive side of empathy in reference to the first part of my thesis (primarily chapters II and IV) where, through the discussion of several theories, it was found that this concept has mutated over the years to accommodate also the information that derives from the physical changes provoked before the actual emotion takes place. Moreover, I prefer the term 'evaluative judgment' to 'appraisal' because the latter expresses the supposition that this type of cognition is subjective or personal, i.e. that it varies according to the person formulating that judgment.

The information collected and necessary to the formulation of the evaluative judgments is not limited to the immediate, i.e. the moment where the target acts, but extends to the past and the future. In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738), Hume seems to agree with this supposition:

> When the present misery of another has any strong influence upon me, the vivacity of the conception is not confined merely to its immediate object, but diffuses its influence over all the related ideas, and gives me a lively notion of all the circumstances of that person, whether past, present, or future; possible, probable or certain (Hume, [1738]1999: 266).

In this passage, Hume asserts that the object of empathy or sympathy, if we follow his terminology, is a collection of ideas or 'conception' about another person. This conception is linked with other ideas, thus developing an image of the person that goes further than the immediate present. In fact, reconstructing someone's perspective requires several pieces of information that are linked and create a *lively* image of that person; what they experience in the present is determined by both their past and future.

Much like the evaluative judgments it forms the base of, information is not neutral; scilicet the details necessary to reconstruct the target and the context are interpreted and put together by the empath. In fact, when the empath collects details about the target, those details and their interpretation are influenced by the person incarnating the empath. The

empath is not a machine that collects and stores information, but a human being made of feelings, cognition, memories, future expectations, etc. Those can influence the formulation of the judgments at the root of empathy. As mentioned earlier, empathy requires evaluative judgments, and the way those judgments are formulated varies according to the identity of the empath.

6.5.1 Two cases of empathy

We do not always have all the necessary details to reconstruct the perspective of the target of our empathy, as some can be missing, erroneous or misunderstood; this can cause an issue in the reconstruction of the perspective of the target. The misunderstanding that can arise due to *incorrect details* will be discussed through two examples. The first, Anouk's test, will be discussed referring to the groups of information outlined in table 7, while the second, the unappreciated Beethoven, was first outlined by Stein and is used to illustrate what might happen when we take our own characteristics or preferences as a model.

My friend Anouk awaits a letter containing the results for her driver's license. After a few days of waiting, the letter finally arrives and when my friend opens it, she starts to cry without saying a word. After seeing my friend in this condition, I feel empathy for her and consequentially feel sad. Which details did I use to reconstruct the action and feel empathy? I will examine those details using the groups of information I have introduced previously:

(1) Grasp the other: Anouk moved the letter closer to her face and, once she had read it, her facial expression changed; she looked astonished and started to cry, unable to utter a word about what she had just read and how she felt about it.

(2) Grasp the context: Anouk has been awaiting the results of the driving test for a few days. She had previously told me that she was worried about the result, as she knows that driving is not one of her strongest skills and she needs a driver's license if

she wants to accept the job offer of her dreams. She opened the letter at home, and because there was no one except me, she genuinely reacted to the communication without trying to hide her spontaneous reaction.

(3) Grasp the relation between the empath and the other: I know that Anouk needs the driver's licence to get her dream job and she worked very hard to obtain it. However, because I am the one who taught her how to drive, I know that she is not a good driver. Moreover, her situation reminds me of that time when I needed to pass my English exam to graduate, and learning languages is not easy for me.

The first two categories, (1) and (2), are the ones which generally include the information that can be subject to incorrect interpretation. In fact, in this example, I interpreted my friend's action as a sign of her failure: I felt empathy and connected with her feeling sad. Fortunately for my friend, I misinterpreted those details: she did indeed pass the exam and her reaction in front of the letter was due the surprise of the positive result. My empathy and its consequent sadness is not wrong, what is *incorrect* is my interpretation of the details at the root of my empathy. For example, I could have interpreted the information about my friend as proof of the fact that she was happy to pass the exam, and feel happy for her. However, this will not change the fact that I connected with her and felt empathy; what was altered is what comes after my empathy: in this case, happiness instead of sadness.

Moreover, it is not always the case that the empath is in possession of sufficiently detailed information to reconstruct the perspective of another person. In this case, the empath will fill the missing gaps by using the information already in their possession to try to guess what is lacking. Similarly to the example above where the chess player tries to guess another player's next move, the empath guesses the missing information on the base of which they formulate the necessary evaluative judgments to feel empathy.

When describing cases of empathic misconstruction, Stein develops a hypothesis very

similar to mine above regarding the difficulties of reconstructing the target's perspective. She asserts that, when we experience empathy, we sometimes arrive to false conclusions when we "take our individual characteristic as a basis instead of our type" (Stein, [1916]1989: 87). By this, Stein means that every individual has their own particular features and preferences. Meanwhile, the empath intends their own characteristics as something universally shared by all individuals (basic features), and not as a type of features that may or not be shared by others. In consequence, the empathy felt might not match what the target is actually feeling. She uses an example to illustrate this hypothesis:

> If I empathise that the unmusical person has my enjoyment of Beethoven symphony, this deception will disappear as soon as I look him in the face and see his expression of deadly boredom. We can make the same error, in principle, when we infer by analogy. Here our own actual, not typical, characteristic forms the starting point, too. If I logically proceed from this, I do not reach a deception […], but a false inference on the basis of the false premise. The result is the same in both cases: an absence of what is really present. Certainly 'common sense' does not take 'inference from oneself to others' as a usable means of reaching others (Stein, [1916]1989: 87).

In Stein's example, the empathic target is the unmusical person listening to a Beethoven symphony. In this case, she empathises with the person through inference by analogy. Her empathy for that person makes her feel joy because this is what she usually feels when she listens to Beethoven's music so she is generalising (universalising) her music preference and applies those to her target: she feels joy when she listens to the Beethoven, the target is listening to Beethoven and is therefore experiencing joy. This false inference is made on false premises based on the assumption by the empath that her musical preferences are shared by all individuals, and that it is common sense to assume that those who listen to a Beethoven symphony will feel joy.

Stein believes that those deceptions caused by the generalisation of the features of specific individuals' features can be prevented when our empathy is guided by 'outer perception'. This means that our empathy should begin with a reconstruction of the physical body of the target (body posture, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.), which will guide our understanding of the target's psychological state (Stein, [1916]1989: 87). In this regard,

Stein offers a very valid point: a direct contact with the target can increase the chances of understanding what others feel. Nevertheless, going back to the example of Anouk's driver's license, there might be circumstances where our direct contact with someone is no guarantee for a correct interpretation of what that person is experiencing. I believe that the reason for this incorrect interpretation is the same as that causing Stein to believe that the unmusical person also enjoys listening to Beethoven: our recreation of the perspective of the target of our empathy is based on what we know and what we are used to.

After all, we do the same in the case of emotions; we evaluate an object, a person, a situation, etc. on the basis of information already at our disposal and fill the missing gaps by making use of what we already know. In the case of empathy, the degree of accuracy of our prediction increases in function of the amount of information previously acquired, our familiarity with a given type of behaviour, and our pre-existing or supposed affinity with the person. In the cases of both emotions in general and empathy in particular, the evaluative judgment(s) establish(es) a relation between us and an external object or individual. From this relation arise physical changes in us which are, in the case of empathy, the same as those experienced by the target of our empathy.

6.6 A comparison between empathy and emotions

Having determined the basic elements that characterise empathy, which I will further develop in chapter VII, I have finally collected all I need to determine whether empathy presents the same characteristics as emotions. My hypothesis is that empathy as an emotion consists in the connection created by the empath with the target when the former assumes the perspective of the latter. This connection is what enables the empath to feel what the target is experiencing, and it is formulated on evaluative judgment(s).

Evaluative judgment(s) are, in this case, those judgments used by the empath to *assemble*

the information they already have about the target and to make conjectures on missing information. Thus, two individuals who feel empathy for the same person might not connect with them as a result of the same evaluative judgments or of the same information. This discrepancy is caused by the fact that, when we approach a person with the aim of understanding what they are experiencing, we use what we *possess* (previous knowledge and experience, preferences, beliefs, desires, personality traits, etc.). We often reach the same evaluative judgments, but this does not mean that these are objective; on the contrary, it means that there are several subjective ways which can lead to the same conclusion.

The evaluative judgments determine a connection between the empath and the target of their empathy, with this connection leading the empath to assume the perspective of the target. Just as the perspective of the target is not always the same but can assume different shapes (for example, they can be happy, sad, etc.), the consequences of empathy can vary greatly. Thus, if empathy is the connection between the empath and the target, the feeling resulting from this connection is not empathy itself, but rather its consequence. When we empathise with our friend and, like them, feel sad or happy, our being happy or sad is not empathy, but the result of it.

Moreover, the connection and the reproduction of the target's perspective would not be possible without a fit body and mind working together or, to put it another way, without both cognitive and affective empathy. I argue that empathy intended as a connection requires both cognitive and affective empathy because, in their absence, we would not be able to understand and simulate what others are experiencing. If only cognitive empathy is active, the impaired empath will be able to understand what the target is feeling, but nothing further. In this case, empathy would be more akin to a skill allowing little more than the recognition that, for instance, 'my shoes are shoes because they have a certain shape and function', and that 'my friend who just won the lottery is happy because they desperately needed the

money'. In this case, the mental process that led us to understand what our friend feels is very similar to the process described in the RT and TT theories of mind. Information (my friend winning the lottery) enables us to deduct rationally or on the basis of causal laws what my friend will feel (happiness). Instead, when we only feel affective empathy, we can reproduce what the other person feels but not understand the reason why. As a result, empathy becomes a contagion of emotions as described by Goldie and developed in chapter V. Goldie uses the case of a person laughing while they watch two people giggling at some private joke, and the person laughs without being aware of the cause of the particular behaviour. In this case, there is a physical connection but the cognitive component is missing. On the contrary, in the case of empathy, the simulation of what another person is experiencing requires both physical and cognitive components; it is the two components that make us mentally and physically connect with someone.

Empathy, intended as a *complete connection*, requires both cognitive and affective empathy because we understand and reproduce what another person feels. This is the main argument that sustains my hypothesis that empathy is an emotion because, much like emotions, it involves both cognitions and physical changes. In the first part of my dissertation, I argued that a hybrid theory of emotions can best facilitate the understanding of both components of emotions: cognition and physical changes. Through my reconstruction of the theories of emotions of Aristotle, Spinoza, and Solomon, I pointed out the role of the evaluative judgments as an aspect of emotions. When we feel an emotion, this emotion contains evaluative judgment(s) about a target. This judgment, much like the one involved in empathy, is subjective because the way the details regarding the target are linked together always varies according to the person formulating them. In the case of emotions, the judgment(s) trigger(s) a specific physical and cognitive reaction. For instance, my friend realised (evaluatively judged) that they won the lottery and what can they accomplish with

the money, and felt happy. The same process is repeated when we feel empathy: I realise (evaluative judgment) that my friend won the lottery and I feel happy because I simulate what they are feeling in that specific moment. My reaction (happiness) is caused by the connection that I established with my friend.

Empathy is not the only emotion through which we connect with or relate to others. Take, for instance, the case of love: we connect with someone else, but the type of connection established does not possess the same peculiarity as that of empathy. In very general terms, love can be defined as a positive affection that encompasses a series of positive experiences ranging from joy, lust, to gratitude, attachment, security, etc. which are caused by our cognitive and physical interaction with an individual or a group. Although there are different types of love (for instance, friendship, romantic love, love for relatives or complete strangers) they all share the property of being a *one-sided* connection, even in those cases where the love is reciprocated by the other person. In fact, when *X* loves *Y*, *X*'s love is one-sided in the sense that the interaction with *Y* causes in *X* the arousal of specific changes that only take place for *X* and do not have anything to do with what *Y* is going through. This is evident when love is not reciprocated: *X* loves *Y*, but *Y* does not feel the same towards *X*; therefore, *X*'s connection is one-sided. Instead, empathy is a *circular* connection; as soon as *X* empathises with *Y*, *X* experiences what *Y* is feeling. The adjective 'circular' is used to emphasise how X's interaction with Y results in the former feeling as the latter.

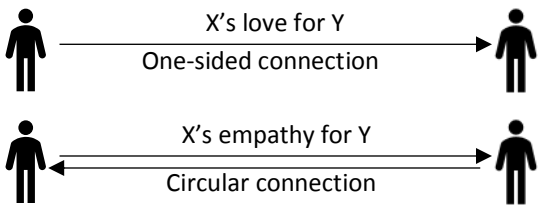

FIGURE 2- Two types of connection

As empathy is a circular connection, it can also be defined as a complete connection. Only with empathy do we assume the perspective of the target; we not only understand but also feel what they are experiencing. This allows us to gain access to the experiences of others

not through the eyes of a witness but through the protagonist's. This is another peculiarity of empathy that makes it differ from other types of emotions; when we love someone, we do not feel like them, but we have a positive affection caused by the interaction we have with that specific individual. We do not gain any knowledge about them, much less share their emotional experiences.

6.6.1 Empathy as an emotion: what next?

Summing up, what makes empathy an emotion is that it involves evaluative judgment(s) about a target which are formulated on the basis of information acquired through previous physical and cognitive changes. These judgments determine the arousal of specific physical and cognitive reactions which lead a person to feel what others are experiencing. In this regard, empathy presents the same features as an emotion when emotions are understood as constituted by cognitive and physical changes. I will root out the confusion leading some to view empathy as a skill and introduce the theoretical advantages of considering empathy as an emotion.

One might object that, if empathy is an emotion, it should exhibit specific exterior characteristics identical to other emotions; for instance, anger, which is considered as a basic emotion, it is often associated with specific physical changes such as changes in the voice tone, eye starring, or flushed skin tone (see chapter I for the definition of basic emotions). This type of objection can be dismissed by saying that not all emotions are linked to specific exterior changes that can be observed by others, for instance not all people who are mad express this emotions with a change in their voice tone. Also, the way we express our emotions, although very similar in individuals, can sometimes vary according to circumstances, culture, or other factors. Therefore, the same criticism made of empathy as an emotion also applies to all emotions in general.

I also argue that empathy, compared to other emotions, is more difficult to study because the instruments available today are often devised to study what happens when one of its components (cognitive and affective empathy) is impaired, and not what occurs when we feel empathy as a whole. The decision of focusing on one of those components might be caused by the fact that it is hard to separate empathy from the emotions that derive from it, or that empathy is elicited by the work of several brain regions. However, a fundamental point here is that the division of empathy into a cognitive and an affective type might be the very cause that led to the dismissal of its qualification as an emotion. In addition, as argued at the beginning of this chapter, the notion of empathy is very often characterised in terms of a skill or an emotion alas with no substantial argument outlining the reasoning of authors making those assertions.

Empathy makes use of cognitive skills to understand the perspective of the person who is the target of our empathy, but the same skills are also used when we feel an emotion for someone after interpreting what they are experiencing. Take, for instance, the example of Anouk's test: this time we are not empathising with her, but on the basis of the information relating to her situation, we feel another type of emotion. For instance, we might be mad because, since she did not pass the test, we will have to drive her to work. In this case, we used our cognitive skills to collect information about Anouk's situation, much like we do when experiencing empathy. We then formulated an evaluative judgment: Anouk's failure will negatively affect our schedule, and this made us mad.

Asserting that empathy is an emotion and clarifying the arguments supporting this position benefits not only the study of empathy, but also disciplines that make use of empathy to unfold specific issues. Take for instance the case of empathy used to determine whether an action should be considered good or evil, or empathy used to promote a certain political or moral ideology. Once we acknowledge that empathy is an emotion, we are forced to

accept that both good, but also evil actions may derive from it (this issue will be further discussed in chapter VIII).

With technology aiming to replicate human behaviours to make our life easier and entertain us, the possibility of replicating human empathy has become of paramount importance. The empathic box and the androids imagined by Dick are no longer far from reality: several technological gadgets are now available that make us assume the perspective of someone else (4D movies, virtual reality googles, etc.). This raises questions on the effects of this type of technologies on our interactions with others in real life and, most importantly, on whether exposure to empathy will increase or decrease the empathy felt for others.

The instances above are not exhaustive, but remain testament to the importance of determining the nature of empathy and what happens when we feel empathy for others. However, as instances, both associations of empathy with morality and technology well summarise the need for clarity on empathy as a topic discussed both on its own, and in association with other issues.

6.7 Summary

In this chapter, I started questioning the nature of empathy. I proposed different definitions of empathy as a skill, emotion and personal trait and argued that, although those definitions diverge on the nature of empathy, they often reach a consensus on what happens when we feel empathy. I then went on to determine the components of empathy and their function in order to reveal the nature of empathy, with a particular emphasis on the role of physical changes and cognition. In the section about physical changes, I focused on the mirror neurons as a system that allows individuals to reproduce an observed action, while in the section about cognition I concentrated on the role of evaluative judgments.

Further, I examined whether my definition of empathy proposed and argued in chapters

V and VI could be compatible with the (hybrid) theories of emotions put forward by Damasio and Solomon, where the link between cognition and physical changes is particularly evident. This comparison matched my original assumption that empathy as whole (cognitive and affective empathy) can be considered as an emotion.

Chapter VII

Several cases of absence of empathy

7.1 Introduction

Based on my thesis that empathy as an emotion, I will review the empirical literature with reference to those cases where an empathy deficit is triggered by physical or mental impairments. The studies in question consider the somatic and cognitive aspects that are crucial to feeling empathy in order not only to determine the causes for the absence or malfunction of empathy in specific individuals, but also to identify the impact of those failures in the everyday life of the people affected. The reference to the empirical literature will strengthen my hypothesis that empathy as an emotion requires both cognitive and affective aspects to simulate what others are experiencing.

My section on physical changes starts with a description of the incident involving Phineas Gage (1823-1860), which has contributed to the development of the idea that, when impaired, certain areas of the brain can cause a malfunction in empathy. Subsequently, by reference to the study conducted by Simon Baron-Cohen, I will identify which brain areas constitute the empathic circuit and what function they carry out. Finally, I will refer to experiments in which people affected by brain injuries in the areas of the empathic circuit show an impairment of their empathy. In the section about cognitive changes, I will introduce the levels of empathy established by Baron-Cohen and afterwards concentrate on selected cases to determine the consequences of empathy impairments on everyday life.

7.2 A breakthrough: Phineas Gage's incident

The first case I will discuss is Gage's incident (1848). In particular, I will discuss the events

that preceded and followed his accident by paying attention to how this is relevant as an instance of empathy deficit. Gage's case represents a milestone in neuroscience research; his misadventure enabled scientists to come up with the hypothesis that brain injuries are connected with personal traits and the emotional life of individuals.

Aged 25, Gage was working as a construction foreman for the Rutland and Burlington Railroad in New England. He and his crew were laying new rail tracks along Vermont (Harlow, 1848: 389). Gage, amongst other duties, oversaw the carrying out of detonations to level the uneven terrain; the procedure for these detonations involved drilling a hole into the stone, filling the hole with explosive powder, covering it with sand and using a fuse and a tamping iron to trigger an explosion in to the rock. Gage was distracted and did not wait for the sand to be added so that, instead of breaking the rock, the explosion hit Gage and drove the tamping iron against the left side of his face (Harlow, 1848: 389). The tamping iron was finely pointed, 3 cm thick and 190 cm long and penetrated both Gage's skull and brain, damaging the left frontal lobe and sparing the superior sagittal sinus (Ratiu and Talos, 2004: e21). After the incident, Gage was stunned but quickly regained consciousness and was back on his feet within a few minutes thanks to the help of his co-workers and of John M. Harlow (1819-1907), the physician who treated his injuries and handled after-care. (Harlow, 1848: 389-390).

His injuries meant Gage lost his left eye, had a partial paralysis on the left side of his face and a deformation on the top of the skull, but he remained physically healthy and recovered from his accident (Harlow, [1868]2016: 277). However, the following encounters between Gage and Harlow, who kept visiting the patient after his recovery, showed a severe alteration in the personality traits that once characterised Gage – "smart business man, very energetic and persistent in executing all his plans of operation". These traits were replaced with others – "impatient of restraint or advice when it conflicts with his desires, at times pertinaciously

obstinate, yet capricious and vacillating, devising many plans of future operation – which made his friends and family say that he was no longer Gage" (Harlow, [1868]2016: 277).

Harlow was one the first to associate Gage's injury with a change in his personality and ability to plan and execute actions, but he can also be considered one of the first to notice the deficiency of empathy in Gage after his incident (Shamay-Tsoory, 2009: 216). Harlow does not explicitly mention empathy in his work, or even specify which type of empathy Gage lost. However, his description of Gage's personality as quoted above, and particularly his reference to Gage "manifesting but little reverence for his fellows" (Harlow, [1868]2016: 277) is conducive to the hypothesis that he did lose the capacity to feel empathy. The speculation on the abnormalities in Gage's empathy is not accepted unconditionally; there is currently a debate aiming at establishing whether Gage lost his empathy or rather his ability to self-regulate (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright, 2004: 210). A team of researchers guided by Hanna Damasio used the remains of Gage's skull to attempt to identify the areas of his brain damaged in the accident. The study shows that the bar perforating Gage's skull inflicted injuries in the ventral and medial sector of the prefrontal cortex (Damasio et al., 1994: 1103). Those are areas that constitute part of the empathic circuit, which will be examined in more detail in this chapter.

Moreover, Harlow's speculation about the correlation between damage to the frontal lobe and the changes in Gage's personality was not fully appreciated at the time. This is possibly because the scientific community was then not ready to accept that there is a neural basis for moral reasoning and social behaviour, but also because Harlow never had the opportunity to perform an autopsy on Gage's brain to confirm his intuition on the relevance of the frontal lobe (Damasio et al., 1994: 1102).

Gage's case represents one of the first pieces of evidence that the emotion of empathy relates to specific brain areas, in particular the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) which

contains the neural circuits that process social information, and enables the comparison of our own perspective with someone else's. There are different regions of the brain involved in the feeling of empathy and, with today's technology, researchers are trying to map the areas of the brain which become active in the case of empathy. However, this is not an easy task as empathy is not localised in a specific, isolated area of the brain which can easily be studied in all its facets. Amongst all the literature available on this subject, the map of the regions of the empathy circuit proposed by the psychologist Baron-Cohen in *The Science of Evil: On Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty* (2011) is noteworthy. Indeed, Baron-Cohen's work integrates most of the relevant literature on the topic and presents the highly technical topic of brain anatomy it in an easily digestible way. His explanation of the consequences of impairments in affective or cognitive empathy is clear and accessible to audiences of no scientific background.

In table 8 below, I propose a recapitulation of the functions of various brain areas as identified by Baron-Cohen, and will refer to those at a later stage in order to examine some empirical studies.

TABLE 8- The empathy circuit

Brain region	Key functions
Medial prefrontal cortex	• It processes social information and its action enables the comparison of our own perspective with someone else's. The MPFC is divided in two subparts: ▪ *dorsal medial prefrontal cortex*, responsible for metarepresentation (thinking about others' feelings and thoughts) and when we think about our own thoughts and feelings; ▪ *ventral medial prefrontal cortex*, compared to the other subparts, this is used when we think about ourselves rather than when we think about other people (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 31).
Orbito-frontal cortex	• It is active when we judge whether something is painful or not; • When damaged, people become disinhibited and have trouble recognising a *faux pas* when they see one (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 33).
Frontal operculum	• It has a key role for both empathy and language; its damage can cause Broca's aphasia (when an individual can understand sentences but cannot produce one).

	• The hypothesis that the FO is active when we feel empathy is due to the fact that this area is equivalent to that active in monkeys when they code other animals' actions and intentions (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 33-34).
Inferior frontal gyrus	• It has a key role in the recognition of other people's emotions (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 34-35) .
Caudal anterior cingulate cortex	• It is active when we experience pain and when we observe other people in pain (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 35-36).
Anterior insula	• It has a key role in bodily aspects of self-awareness (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 35-36).
Right temporal partial junction	• It has a key role when we judge a person's beliefs and intentions, monitor self and others and it might be involved in non-social functions (e.g. attention switching). Moreover, its stimulation can produce the weird experience that someone else is present when there is no one else with us. • Its damage can cause difficulties in judging someone's intention and leads to experiences of out-of-body (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 37).
Posterior superior temporal sulcus	• It is involved in observing biological motion. • Its damage can compromise the ability to judge what another person is looking at (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 37-38).
Somatosensory cortex	• It has a role in the feeling of the sensations that arise from touching an object, but it is also active when we observe other people being touched. • Its damage can compromise our capacity to recognise other people's emotions (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 38).
Inferior Parietal Lobule ***Inferior Parietal Sulcus*** ***Frontal operculum*** ***Inferior frontal gyrus*** **Miorror neuron system**	• It is active when we observe someone doing an action and enable observers to mentally reproduce the action without actually moving. • The mirror neuron system is hard to measure in human beings because it is unethical to place electrodes directly in to the brain of conscious and healthy subjects for the sole purpose of experimentation (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 39-40).
Amygdala	• It is involved in emotional learning and regulation (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 40-41).

7.2.1 The consequences of brain injuries on empathy

I will discuss two empirical studies to determine how researchers arrived at the conclusion that the erosion of empathy can be determined by the malfunction of specific brain areas.

As asserted above, empathy involves several areas of the brain which play different roles in the arousal of this emotion; identifying those areas and establishing their role is still work in progress and, even if those areas can be identified, their specific involvement is difficult to establish. When the brain is healthy and empathy arises, the areas involved are all operative and, because they work as a circuit, the activity of one influences and enables the work of the others. Isolating the specific areas and understanding how they work when

empathy occurs seems to be the best way of understanding the process, but it has not yet been possible to accomplish such a task. This is perhaps because ethical issues ban experiments on healthy subjects, or because the circuits involved in empathy are connected in a way which does not enable scientists to disconnect one of the areas of the brain without compromising the understanding of its functions.

A way of determining the brain areas involved in empathy is to compare a healthy brain to an injured one. Some severe brain injuries (e.g. a diffuse damage through the cerebrum concentrated in the ventral surfaces of the frontal and temporal lobes) cause damage leading not only to a deprivation of empathy, but also to the alteration of social behaviours (Sousa et al., 2010: 3585; Sousa et al., 2011: 526). In empirical studies, the subjects of the experiments are generally divided into two groups; one with severe traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and another with no damage. In order to measure effects on empathy, both groups are exposed to stimuli – such as images, videos or questionnaires – which cause the arousal of empathy. The reaction to the stimuli is recorded for both groups and a comparison is established to ascertain the difference in the empathy felt.

In collaboration with other researchers, Ariel de Sousa was one of the first to analyse and conduct a study inherent to the lack of empathy among those who suffered TBI. The aim of the experiment was to confirm the hypothesis based on existing literature that the level of empathy felt by the TBI group is lower than that felt by the control group constituted of individuals who did not suffer any brain damage. The control group was expected to show a more intense automatic facial muscle activity at the sight of people with happy and angry facial expressions, while the TBI group should have displayed little responsivity to emotional faces (Sousa et al., 2011: 527).

Part of the experiment consisted in comparing facial muscle activity (EMG) and skin conductance between TBI observers and healthy control subjects while watching the face of

someone who accentuates specific facial expressions (Sousa et al., 2011: 528). The study involved 28 individuals with TBI (5 female and 23 male) who suffered post-traumatic amnesia for no longer than one day, and had no prior history of psychiatric, neurological and developmental disorder (Sousa et al., 2011: 527-528). The control group was constituted with 22 individuals (8 females and 14 males) selected to closely match the features exhibited by the TBI group: same age, gender, levels of education, anxiety and depression (Sousa et al., 2011: 528).

The research team selected thirty-four grey pictures as stimuli, each of them depicting a man or a woman posing with two different facial expressions – angry and happy. The images were shown to participants and their reactions recorded. They were then asked to answer two questionnaires to assess the level of emotional empathy and check their psychological status to measure the level of their symptoms of depression and anxiety (Sousa et al., 2011: 529).

The data collected through the experiment confirmed the hypothesis that the TBI group, due to their brain damage, presented an abnormal level of empathy compared to that exhibited by the control group (Sousa et al., 2011: 530). Lower levels were reported in the facial mimicry of emotional expressions of the TBI group; they smiled in response to emotional expressions of happiness, but exhibited negligible response to angry facial expressions where the control group frowned instead (Sousa et al., 2011: 532). Moreover, the skin conductance test revealed that the control group reacted more affectively to facial expressions of anger, and this reaction is in line with the assumption that angry faces prompt stronger reactions. Instead, the TBI group adopted an opposite reaction: their skin conductance response was more active in the presence of happy faces (Sousa et al., 2011: 532).

Although the research by Sousa's team presents evidence that brain damage can affect the empathy felt, this research, at the own admission of the research team, has two drawbacks. The first one relates to the nature of the subject, i.e. the difference in the empathy felt by those who suffered brain injuries. The participants' brains had suffered previous damage and therefore it was impossible to identify the specific area that causes empathy to arise. However, the injuries to the prefrontal cortex and the ventral system sustained by the participants lead to the reasonable conclusion that these areas play a key role in the arousal of empathy (Sousa et al., 2011: 532). The second limitation is that the results of the experiment are based upon the use of static facial expressions, not actual interpersonal faces. It is probable that the perception of posed faces, such as the ones used during the experiment, are less emotionally arousing and thus cause a reduced emotional response (Sousa et al., 2011: 532).

The research team composed of S. G. Shamay-Tsoory, R. Tomer, D. Goldsher, B. D. Berger and J. Aharon-Peretz takes a step further in determining how a brain injury can affect empathy. In fact, they conducted an experiment comparing empathy felt by three different groups: patients with prefrontal lesions, patients with parietal lesions and healthy control subjects. The aim of their experiment was to measure the effect that localised brain lesions have on the various aspects of empathy: cognitive and affective or emotive (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1114). Taking into account Eslinger's research according to which different regions of the prefrontal cortex modulate different aspects of empathy (the dorsolateral prefrontal system mediates the cognitive aspect, and the orbitoprefrontal system the affective aspect), the research team speculates that empathy would be differently compromised depending on the area of the brain which sustained damage (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1114). Consequently, they compared the effect of localised lesions in the prefrontal cortex on cognitive and affective empathy (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1114).

The two groups of patients that had sustained a brain injury were divided in to prefrontal (36 people) and parietal group (15 people) depending on the location of the lesion they presented (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1115). Meanwhile, the control group was formed of 19 healthy volunteers who did not show signs of any psychiatric illness or neurological disease (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1115). The three groups were similar in age, education level and level of intellectual functioning (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1118). All underwent to the same type of tests, which involved principally an assessment of the cognitive and affective empathy.

Cognitive empathy was evaluated through the Hebrew version of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), which is divided in two subscales covering different aspects of empathy: a) the perspective-taking subscale, which measures the natural tendency to adopt the state of mind of another person; b) the fantasy subscale, which evaluates the natural tendency to imagine oneself in a fictional situation (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1116). The affective empathy was estimated through the Questionnaire Measure of Emotional Empathy, which assesses the tendency to react emotionally to an observed action executed by someone (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1116). Several types of tests were run to evaluate the general intellectual functioning, the level of depression, the verbal and letter fluency, the recognition of facial expression and the recognition of affective prosody (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1118).

The results of the experiment showed that both TBI groups had higher levels of depression compared to the control group. There was no significant difference in the level of depression between the prefrontal and the parietal group (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1118). The results of the cognitive and affective empathy tests demonstrate that the participants with lesions limited to the prefrontal cortex have reduced cognitive and affective empathy (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1123). The extension of this impairment is

determined by the hemisphere damaged and the location of the injury; in particular, lesions in the right hemisphere's prefrontal cortex can cause a severe decrease in empathy (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1123). Injury to the left hemisphere causes an impairment of empathy only when the damage is located in the prefrontal cortex; meanwhile, injuries located in either the prefrontal or parietal regions of the right hemisphere may impair empathy (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2004: 1123).

The cases outlined above consist in empirical studies concerning the existence of specific areas of the brain whose activity plays a role in the feeling of empathy. Those studies look at participants who present brain injuries located in specific areas of the brain and try to determine whether a malfunction of those areas leads to an impairment of empathy. To arise, empathy requires all brain regions constituting the empathic circuits to be operational and able to interact with one another. When one or more of those areas have been compromised, for example due to an incident or physical anomalies present at birth, empathy will also be compromised because this emotion arises due to the work and cooperation of the brain areas in question. If one or more brain regions that constitute the empathic circuits are unable to perform their duties, the activities of the other areas will be affected negatively as the signals they receive will contain erroneous or broken information on the basis of which healthy brain regions will elaborate new signals to be transmitted to other brain regions.

Studying empathy from an empirical perspective based on the result of neurobiological experiments strengthens the assertion that empathy does not reside in a specific area of the brain, and that understanding empathy requires an examination of all its components and the interactions between them. Furthermore, an analysis of empathy's physical dimension would not be complete without taking into consideration the manner in which those physical changes manifest themselves in the empathy felt by people and in their behaviour.

7.3 Erosion of empathy due to mental illness

In the following paragraphs, I will introduce Baron-Cohen's classification of several cases of mental illness that involve, amongst other impairments, difficulties in feeling empathy.

Baron-Cohen presents empathy as the "ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to their thoughts and feeling with an appropriate emotion" (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 18). According to Goldman, the definition proposed by Baron-Cohen has three levels or senses: a) 'empathy' refers to a simulation used to read the mental states of others; b) 'empathy' refers to the motivation or interest of grabbing the mental states of others; c) those who feel empathy not only desire to know what others are experiencing but they also have affective responses for them (Goldman, 2006:203). Baron-Cohen's definition of empathy is only partially compatible with the one I advanced in chapters V and VI, and the major difference lies in the fact that he believes that empathy should be considered as an ability and that it is therefore not an emotion. Even though there is an important difference between his notion of empathy and the one I introduced through chapters V and VI, both definitions share common elements.

Baron-Cohen uses the Empathy Quotient test (EQ) to determine how developed the two components of empathy, recognition and response, are in the population. This is a self-reporting type of test and, despite the high level of inaccuracy these tests may involve, Baron-Cohen guarantees the accuracy of EQ by stating that the use of large samples drastically reduces the amount of sporadic inaccuracies (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 24).Through the use of the EQ test, Cohen determines the existence of seven levels of empathy whose features I have summarised in the table below.

TABLE 9- Levels of empathy

Levels of empathy	Key features
0	• Do not understand what other people are feeling and therefore do not experience remorse or guilt. • Can commit crimes such as murder, assault, rape and torture.

People who do not feel empathy at all	• Some might have difficulties to relate to others, but have no desire to hurt them (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 25-26).
1 People with sporadic empathy	• Still capable of committing violent cries in certain circumstances. • Not able to take into consideration other people's feelings when their violent temper is triggered and their judgment becomes clouded. • Can feel a certain degree of empathy, which can be turned off when they *see red* (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 26).
2 People who experience major difficulties related to empathy	• Their level of empathy allows them to vaguely understand how another person feels and this knowledge is sufficient to inhibit any physical aggression. • Able to realise they have hurt someone, although doing so requires feedback from the other person or a witness. • Anticipating other people's feelings does not occur naturally for them; often get into trouble due to their erroneous interpretation (for example, they do or say the wrong things) (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 26-27).
3 People who are conscious of their low empathy	• Try to make up for their low level of empathy, and pretending to *be normal* can be exhausting and stressful. • Avoid jobs or relationships that require a high level of empathy. • Small talk, chatting and conversation can be hard because those activities are unpredictable and not regulated by fixed rules. • Feel the relief of not having to pretend to be like everyone else when alone (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 27).
4 People with a low-average empathy	• The low level of empathy does not have an impact on the everyday interactions of this type of people. • Feel more relaxed when the topics of the conversation do not involve emotions. • Their friendship and relationships might be based more on shared activities and focus less on emotional intimacy (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 27-28)
5 People partially above the average level of empathy	• Not always thinking about the feelings of others, but take those feelings into consideration and use this information to determine which behaviours to adopt at work and at home. • Restrain themselves from stating their opinion if there is a chance that it will be interpreted as intrusive or dominating (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 28).
6 People with a high level of empathy	• Constantly focused on the feelings of others. • Do their best to support those who surround them. • Other people are always under their radar as if their empathy were in an endless condition of hyperarousal (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 28-29).

According to Baron-Cohen, the differences between the level of empathy exhibited by those who undertook the EQ test is rooted in the fact that the empathy circuit is underactive in specific individuals. In other words, the arousal of empathy is not the same as in healthy subjects (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 30). The levels of empathy introduced by Baron-Cohen in *The Science of Evil* are useful in representing the hypothesis that empathy varies in intensity. The differences in Baron-Cohen's range of empathy are circumscribed to malfunctions in the empathy circuit; they do not take into consideration variations caused by an individual's

difficulty in reconstructing the perspective of the target of their empathy due to the empath's lack of information or the target's unusual behaviour (e.g. people originating from a different culture). Nevertheless, the levels lack clarity as Baron-Cohen labels three different elements as empathy. Cognition (1) and physical changes (2) are the first two elements that constitute empathy, while sympathy (3) represents the actions resulting from the empathy felt by the empath (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright, 2004: 164-165). In his description of the levels of empathy, Baron-Cohen blends these components (feelings, cognition, and sympathy) because he interprets empathy as being able to identify what someone thinks and feels and how they react to this. However, if read under the light of the distinctions of empathy (physical changes and cognition) and sympathy that I have proposed, Baron-Cohen's levels of empathy can be used to explore in more depth behaviours and empathy in Level 0 individuals.

7.3.1 Level 0 of empathy

I recapped the levels of empathy as identified by Baron-Cohen in table 9, and will now focus in more detail on Level 0 and the individuals belonging to this group. To Baron-Cohen, "zero degrees of empathy means you have no awareness of how you come across to others, how to interact with others, or how to anticipate their feelings or reaction" (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 45). His other levels of empathy blend three components (cognition, physical changes and sympathy) lacking in those with zero degrees of empathy. Baron-Cohen divides the cases of zero degrees of empathy in negative and positive. The first group, the zero-negative, includes individuals suffering with three different conditions: borderline, psychopathic and narcissistic personality disorders; meanwhile, zero-positives will include individuals suffering with Asperger syndrome.

Baron-Cohen believes that individuals affected by borderline personality disorder might experience difficulties in both components of empathy (recognition and response), because they struggle with reading another individual's intentions and are less able to react with an appropriate emotion (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 58). Borderline personality disorder is a disorder characterised by "self-destructive impulsivity, anger and mood swings" (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 57). Those affected by this personality disorder tend to be "very manipulative", "they rage at those they love" and often "report that feeling of emptiness leaves them with a lack of core identity" (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 58-59). Individuals suffering with borderline personality disorder have trouble being alone and seek companionship as a result. No matter who they manage to establish a relationship with, they feel either suffocated (for example, by someone who tries to get closer to them) or abandoned (for example, by someone who is being distant to them) (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 61). Their brain presents a decrease in the binding between neurotransmitters and serotonin receptors; this abnormality occurs in particular in those regions forming part of the empathy circuit, such as the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, the middle cingulate cortex, and areas of the temporal lobe (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 65). Thus, through the use of neuroimaging techniques, it has been revealed that subjects suffering with borderline personality disorder present an underactivity in the orbital frontal cortex and in the temporal cortex (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 65-66).

The second case of zero-negative level of empathy is psychopathic personality disorder; people suffering with the disorder generally lack affective empathy. A psychopath is a person who suffers with an antisocial personality disorder (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 70) and, much like individuals suffering with borderline personality disorder, is completely self-absorbed. Psychopaths are also prepared to do whatever is necessary to satisfy their desires (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 67). They exhibit a constant disregard for the rights of other people, a behaviour that starts during their childhood or adolescence and carries on through their adult

life. Other interesting characteristics, which are based on Hervey Cleckey's book *The Mask of Sanity* (1941) and reported by Baron-Cohen, are: superficial charm; lack of anxiety or guilt; undependability and dishonesty; egocentricity; failure to learn from punishment; poverty of emotions (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 71).

When their empathy levels are measured, psychopaths score the lowest level. However, self-reporting types of tests that aim at evaluating the empathy of psychopaths are extremely unreliable: people with psychopathic personality disorder cannot be trusted to answer self-reports truthfully, because of their propensity to lie and not answer honestly in order not to reveal their real nature (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 78). To get a more accurate result of the level of empathy in people with psychopathic personality disorder and reduce the possibility of them lying, a good strategy consists in measuring their physiological reaction during an automatic arousal. The experiment consists in measuring the galvanic skin response, and determining how much the palms of the hands of a person sweat when they are in front of pictures which normally arouse an emotional response (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 79). The result of the test shows that individuals with psychopathic personality disorder are less aroused when they look at pictures depicting people in distress and that, therefore, they possess a low level of affective empathy (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 79). On the other hand, the fact that psychopaths often grasp information about the feelings and thoughts of other people, and use this information against them or as a tool to help them to satisfy their desires, suggests that their cognitive empathy is often unimpaired (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 79). People with psychopathic personality disorder can grasp information about other people (feelings, thoughts, plans, circumstances, etc.) but have trouble absorbing this information as if they were that specific person; they show cognitive but not emotional empathy. The absence of emotional empathy can explain why psychopaths often use other people as if they were pawns to be moved to reach a certain goal. The empathic circuit of psychopaths presents

some abnormalities: the activity of the ventral medial prefrontal cortex is less intense than in other people and the integrity of the connection between the ventral medial prefrontal cortex, the orbito-frontal cortex and the amygdala is reduced (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 84).

The third case of zero-negative level of empathy is narcissism; people who are classified as narcistic are deficient in cognitive empathy. They are extremely self-centred and believe they are superior to other people (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 94). Narcissism can take several shapes and Baron-Cohen depicts three examples of how this personality disorder can appear: a) some people are very outgoing and want to be in the centre of attention; b) others look shy, but still believe they are more important, for example they expect people come to them instead of meeting them half way; c) and some can become dangerous (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 95). When taking a self-report test (the Interpersonal Reactivity Index) to evaluate their empathy levels, narcissistic individuals exhibit a deficiency in cognitive empathy, but show no deficit in emotional empathy (Ritter et al., 2011: 245). The empathic circuit of people with narcissism still needs to be addressed by researchers, but Baron-Cohen believes that it is probable that this kind of people present abnormalities in the same areas of the brain as people suffering with borderline or psychopathic personality disorder (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 96).

While the zero-negative group includes instances of mental illnesses that can lead individuals to perform actions that can physically or emotionally harm others, the zero-positive group is made of individuals presenting some problem related with empathy who, at the same time, demonstrate they possess an extremely precise mind (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 99). Individuals diagnosed with Asperger syndrome are part of this group; their condition is part of the autistic spectrum, and they are considered part of the zero-positive group for three reasons: a) their empathic difficulties are connected with the fact that their brain processes information in a peculiar manner which, in certain cases, can lead to them becoming

excellent in certain disciplines; b) the way that their brain operates leads them to pay close attention to moral rules; c) although their cognitive empathy presents abnormalities, their emotional empathy is still functional and permits them to care about other people (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 100).

People affected by Asperger exhibit underactivity in several areas of the empathic circuit. For instance, Asperger sufferers show a reduced activity of the dorsomedial prefrontal cortex compared to non-Asperger individuals when they read short stories and have to draw conclusions about the intentions, reasoning and state of mind of the characters (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 105). Thus, they find it challenging to decode the facial expression of a person depicted in a picture and to determine what this person might feel or think. They show a limited activity of the frontal operculum, the amygdala and the anterior insula. Those who are part of the zero-positive group not only have difficulties in understanding other people: they also struggle to understand their own mind (alexithymia) (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 106). When people from this group have to indicate how they feel at the sight of a picture that has a strong emotional charge, they exhibit, compared to normal people, less activity in specific areas of the empathic circuit: the dorsal medial prefrontal cortex, the posterior cingulate cortex and the temporal pole (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 106). The low level of activity of the dorsal medial prefrontal cortex in the case introduced above also occurs when autistic people are asked to read the mind of other people (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 106).

7.4 Empathy: what can philosophy learn from the empirical studies?

In this section, I will argue that it is important to refer to empirical studies while studying empathy from a philosophical perspective. I will begin by referring to the consequences of empathy impairments on the life of those affected, and then move on to explain why the

empirical literature is consistent with my hypothesis that empathy as an emotion requires both cognitive and affective empathy.

With the use of empirical studies, Baron-Cohen's work in particular, I aimed at establishing the importance of certain areas of the brain in the experience of empathy. Since Harlow's analysis of Phineas Cage's case, which constitutes one of the first attempts to connect certain brain regions to specific functions, researchers have made huge progress in determining which brain regions become active when empathy occurs. However, determining exactly which brain areas are active when we feel empathy, what the role of these regions is and how they interact has proven very hard to achieve because they operate pretty in a circuit. Therefore, if empathy operates like a circuit, isolating one of its components with the purpose of identifying its characteristics is impossible as the functions belonging to that particular component only operate when connected with other components. A way of overcoming the challenges caused by mapping the brain regions responsible for our empathy consists in studying the differences between a healthy brain and an injured one. I described a few experiments in this regard and, despite their differences in content and methodology, they all attempt to establish what happens to our empathy when one or more regions of our brain have been injured. Those studies show there are certain brain regions which are responsible for the experience of empathy: when one of those regions has been injured, the empathy felt is unparished in a specific way. As a consequence of those injuries, and depending of the areas affected, cognitive or affective empathy can be compromised in terms of recognising or reproducing what others are feeling and experiencing.

As already stated, Gage's case contributed to the assumption that brain injuries can cause changes in the empathy felt. Harlow's description of this case sheds light on what happens when those types of injuries occur; for instance, after the incident, Gage became more selfish, unable to control his impulses and to take the needs of others into consideration.

These differences in the subject's behaviour are the identical to those investigated by researchers to measure the difference in empathy between heathy subjects and those suffering with mental illnesses. In fact, the differences in the empathy felt by individuals are not only due to brain injuries but can also be caused by mental illness when the impairments which are part of the illness involve, amongst others, difficulties related to empathy. In this regard, Baron-Cohen's analysis of empathy is very significant; he simplifies a topic often treated in complex terms, allowing those not familiar with the topic to get a glimpse of the most important facets of the relation between empathy deficits and mental impairments.

The following table contains the cases studied by Baron-Cohen in *The Science of Evil* and reported by me in this chapter with the purpose of strengthening my assumption that empathy as an emotion requires both cognitive and affective empathy. I used '+' to indicate when the cognitive or emotional aspect of empathy is intact and '–' to indicate deficiencies.

TABLE 10- Level 0 of empathy

	Name	Cognitive empathy	Affective empathy
Zero-Negative: Bad for the sufferer and for those who surround them	**Borderline**	-	+
	Psychopathy	+	-
	Narcissism	-	+
Zero-Positive: Difficulties associated with empathy, but individuals possess a very precise (exact) mind	**Asperger**	-	+

The zero-negative group is constituted of individuals suffering with borderline, psychopathic and narcissistic personality disorders. Although those pathologies involve different types of deficits associated with empathy, these deficits have a negative impact on the life of those they affect, as well as individuals who surround them. Their mental illness and their difficulties in empathy may lead them to take actions that can physically or emotionally hurt other people because they cannot fully (cognitively and affectively) empathise with others.

This is particularly evident in the case of psychopaths, who use the information acquired through their cognitive empathy to manipulate those who around them and prompt them to undertake specific actions. Their ability to recognise what others feel without being affected by it enables them to use the information gathered to their own advantage, for instance by inflicting pain onto others or using them achieve their goals more easily.

Whereas individuals in the zero-negative group are those more at risk of committing actions that can physically or emotionally hurt other people, people suffering with Asperger syndrome develop their own moral code, and therefore avoid hurting others through their extremely developed ability of systemising (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 127). The term 'systemise' is to be construed as an ability to scrutinise changing patterns and to understand how things operate (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 109). This ability is present in all people to varying degrees, and individuals with Asperger are, due to the making of their brain, particularly advantaged in the use of it (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 109). People with Asperger show a lack of cognitive empathy, but their emotional empathy and their extremely well-developed ability of systemising pushes them to desire to live in accordance with rules. They expect other people will do the same (Baron-Cohen, 2011: 127). Thus, although people with Asperger are unable to recognise the cause of other people's feelings, they can sense other emotions and take this into account when planning the best course of action.

The empirical studies that have been considered in this chapter are a further confirmation that empathy requires both cognitive and affective aspects. In fact, it has been revealed that, when one of the two components are impaired, this has also an effect on the overall empathy if empathy is intended as recognising what others feel and simulate those feelings as if we are going through the same changes. Through chapters V and VI, I asserted that empathy is an emotion after comparing its features to those exhibited in a hybrid theory of emotions in which emotions are physical changes arising due to an evaluative judgment or a set of

evaluative judgments about an object. As an emotion, empathy is aroused by evaluative judgment(s) about a person who is the target of our empathy; we reconstruct the perspective of the target through those judgments and then simulate what they are experiencing. Thus, the empirical studies quoted here also encourage the hypothesis that empathy is an emotion because, as is the case for other emotions, its arousal requires both physical and cognitive changes.

Moreover, the same empirical studies, especially those concerning psychopaths and individuals suffering with Asperger syndrome, constitute a fertile ground for the assumption that the connection of empathy and altruistic or charitable actions is not to be taken for granted. In fact, as seen through Baron-Baron-Cohen's work, psychopaths use the information acquired with their cognitive empathy to their own advantage and not with the purpose of relieving others from their suffering. Meanwhile, the individuals suffering with Asperger syndrome use their affective empathy and their ability to systemise to make up for their lack of cognitive empathy and avoid harming others. It is true that, in the cases in question, empathy is impaired; however, both examples shed light on the fact that empathy does not always result in good or charitable actions. Empathy is often associated with morality in the literature, however, as already anticipated in chapters V and VI where I divided the actions deriving from empathy in evil and good sympathy, there are circumstances where we make use of our connection with others to our own advantage. This topic will be further addressed in chapter VIII, where I will discuss the role of empathy in the moral and political spheres.

7.5 Summary

In this chapter, I tested the hybrid theory of empathy against some of the empirical literature. To better understand the phenomenon, we need to consider both physical and cognitive changes, and make use of all instruments available (see, for instance, neuroscientific and

psychological sources). It emerged that empirical studies confirm that, when one of the two types or aspects of empathy (cognitive and affective) is impaired due to a physical or mental illness, the overall phenomenon of empathy will also be affected. This suggests that empathy is an emotion requiring two aspects: when we feel empathy for someone, we collect information about their emotional situation and formulate evaluative judgments. Those judgments determine the arousal of specific physical changes that echo those experienced by the target of our empathy. Thus, much like other emotions, the arousal of empathy is caused by evaluative judgments about a target which, in turn, contribute to the arousal of physical changes.

Moreover, the reference to the empirical studies strengthens the assumption made earlier (and which will be further addressed in chapter VIII) that empathy, as an emotion, does not share an unbreakable bind with morality.

Chapter VIII

Empathy and sympathy in the community

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to establish whether empathy and the sympathetic actions deriving from it have an important role to play in the way individuals live and act in a community, as well as in the manner the community itself operates and functions. I decided to tackle this issue in the final chapter of my thesis to put into perspective the assumption made at the beginning of my work that empathy is an emotion, and that recognising this has consequences beyond the research carried out in the field of philosophy of mind. In fact, it is the issue of establishing whether empathy plays an important role in the life of a community that prompted me to investigate the topic in the first place, and to use some of the conceptual and empirical literature on empathy to determine what the phenomenon is, and how it works.

After attempting to provide a clear definition of empathy based upon my view of empathy as an emotion, I can move forward and begin to address this new issue. I will begin by explaining how I use the word 'community' and then consider two uses of 'empathy' as they appear in recent speeches of Pope Francis and former American president Barack Obama. Both refer to empathy as an instrument that can be used to solve some of the issues that afflict the community.

I will tackle the importance of empathy from the perspective of a community. I take the community to be a system which needs to maintain its stability, and guarantees its members better life conditions than are available outside the community. I will present some cases

where individuals act or fail to act upon the empathy they feel, and will establish the consequences of those actions or omissions on the community and its members. Finally, I will argue that the empathy we feel for others can constitute a reminder of the fact that we are all equally important in the community; this emotion proves crucial in cases where the mechanisms used by the community to sustain itself no longer work.

8.2 The community: from Aristotle to Pope Francis and Obama

In the course of this chapter, I will refer to the term 'community' by giving it a meaning that draws inspiration from the concepts of Talcott Parsons's 'social system' and to Aristotle's '*polis*' (city). Parsons says that a social system 'consists in a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical or environmental aspect'; the actions undertaken by its members are aimed at optimising the level of gratification of those who act, or those surrounding them (Parsons, 2005: 4). The action system, that is the set of actions of the individual actors, is determined by the culture and the personality of those acting (Parsons, 2005: 4). Aristotle asserts that a city is "a species of association, and secondly, that all associations come into being for the sake of some good – for all men do all their acts with a view to achieving something which is, in their view, a good" (Aristotle, 2009b: Pol. 1252a1-3).

With these two definitions in mind, I will use the term 'community' to refer to a group of people who share a basic system of values and come together with the purpose of having a better life than they would have if they did not belong to a community. A community gives its members some benefits that can be sealed either by a system of laws they are obliged to abide by, or by the intervention of values that are upheld through ethics, politics, religion, culture, etc. At the same time, members are obliged to respect the benefits enjoyed by other members of the community, and this is, just as the benefits themselves, guaranteed by

appealing to the law or to certain values.

I stated that one of the main purposes of the community is to guarantee its members the possibility of searching for and accessing better life conditions. Achieving this requires that all members be considered equally important in the sense that all have the right to be part of the community and to enjoy the benefits and duties this entails. Suppose that it is true that the community considers all its members to be of equal importance: the actions of those who do not have respect for the life of others and take advantage of them as if they were objects or instruments will not be tolerated because this goes against the community's main purpose.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) wrote about the use of others as instruments asserting that, regardless of whether our actions are oriented towards our own good or that of others, we should always treat humanity as an end and never as a means (Kant, [1785]2006: AAIV 428). Kant authored a moral system in which the agents are considered as rational beings who follow rules on the basis of pure practical reason, and not in accordance with experiences (Kant, [1785]2006: AAIV 408). The core principle of this moral system states that "I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law" (Kant: AAIV 402); in other words, we should always act in such a manner we auspicate others would; where we evaluate that others should not carry out an action, we should also refrain from carrying out this action ourselves (Power et al., 2008: 245). This core principle is defined by Kant as categorical imperative, i.e. a command given by pure practical reason in reference to something which all rational human beings would agree ought or ought not to be done (Kant, [1785]2006: AAIV 413).

Kant considers that not treating other others as instruments is a second formulation of the categorical imperative because it establishes a constraint for our actions: when using others as instruments, we are act immorally in that we deny that every rational being exists in itself and that the purpose of their existence is not to be a means or instrument that we can

use for a benefit (Kant, [1785]2006: AAIV 428-429).

The moral system proposed by Kant has been subject to criticisms mostly linked to the fact that, in his system, the moral agent acts according to duties imposed by the categorical imperative. In this regard, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) argues that the thesis "never treat other as instruments" cannot be deducted *a priori* (without any experience) and that it cannot be universally applied as we decide how to act best. Before reviewing Sartre's critique, I should acknowledge that, for my purposes here, I do not offer a complete overview of both Kant's and Sartre's thesis. My focus on Sartre's criticism of Kant and on the role of responsibility should be viewed as *food for thought* to assist in developing my thesis on the role of empathy.

Sartre discusses the case of his pupil who, during the Nazi occupation of France, was torn between staying at home with his mother, a lonely woman who would deeply suffer the loss of her son if he died, or joining the French resistance units fully acknowledging that his intervention might not substantially alter the conclusion of the conflict (Sartre, [1945]2003: 30-31). According to Sartre, the pupil's dilemma concerns two different actions: one that is concrete and immediate but would only benefit one individual, the other with an greater end (it could benefit more people), but harder to achieve (Sartre, [1945]2003: 31). If we apply the categorical imperative of "never treating others as instruments" only as a duty which must be fulfilled, the pupil would be unable to choose between his mother and the French resistance because there would be a collision of duties which, *a priori*, have equal importance. If the pupil chooses his mother, he will treat her as an end, but those who constitute the French resistance will become an instrument because they will fight for his freedom while he is not contributing to the cause. On the contrary, if the pupil chooses the French resistance, its members will be treated as an end but his mother will become an instrument since her wellbeing will be compromised by the son leaving her alone after taking

advantage of the benefits he enjoyed while he was living with her (Sartre, [1945]2003: 31).

In opposition to Kant's universal moral system, Sartre summed up his best advice to his pupil:

> You are free, so choose -in other words invent. No general code of ethics can tell you what you ought to do: there are no signs in this world (Sartre, [1945]2003: 33).

Sartre believes that we are responsible for the (moral) choices we make and that therefore no principle or value can *a priori* determine how we should act. He illustrates the importance of freedom and responsibility of the moral agents through a comparison between moral choices and the construction of a work of art (Sartre, [1945]2003: 45). To Sartre, no one criticises an artist who, while painting a picture, does not follow the principles established *a priori*; this is because there are no aesthetic values established *a priori*. Instead, those values transpire through the piece of art when it is finished and through the relationship between the artist and what they created (Sartre, [1945]2003: 45-46). A moral agent, much like an artist, acts per 'creation' and 'invention' because they cannot decide *a priori* what must be done (Sartre, [1945]2003: 46). This is why no moral system can help us determine how to act well: we learn how to best act through the choices we make; this makes us responsible for who we are, and what we do. It seems that, to Sartre, morality is rooted in the choices we make and those choices are not based on values that are imposed upon us *a priori* (contrary to the moral system proposed by Kant). At the same time, Sartre postulates that morality cannot be based on affections we have for others as these arise due past actions we chose to take (Sartre, [1945]2003: 32).

Although Sartre denies the role of emotions (affections) in determining the best course of action, he acknowledges the importance of previous choices as way of shaping values through which we determine what is good or not. Sartre's exclusion of emotions and inclusion of previous choices are contradictory if we take into account Aristotle's concept of state of mind as outlined in chapter II; indeed, previous emotions determine how we relate

with other objects in the future. Therefore, deciding how to best act and what is good does not necessarily mean that previous emotions cannot have a successful role in determining what is good; see for instance, Aristotle's figure of the wise person discussed also in chapter II.

Putting aside the connection between emotions and future choices, what matters here is the thesis that morality and the actions deriving from it cannot be imposed universally on those acting. I will introduce three justifications for this statement. Firstly, if we act morally due to an imposition in which we do not believe or with which we disagree, we are prone to act immorally when assured of not being caught. Secondly, when a moral system is imposed on people, it is also necessary to impose a system of punishment (such as social disapproval) that prevents cases of disobedience. Thirdly, the imposition of a moral system implies that individuals are unable to determine what is good on their own and need to refer to someone or something to decide how they should act.

8.2.1 Political empathy

The question of whether empathy and sympathy have a role in improving the life of a community will be addressed from the perspective of the individuals constituting that community and of the community itself. In doing so, I will present the case of the *practical* life of individuals in a hypothetical community, i.e. all those challenges or aspects that are part of everyday life and have an impact on an individual's life or on the life of community members.

Before moving forward with the discussion on the role of empathy in a community, it should be pointed out that literature does not agree on the positive role of empathy in practical actions. In fact, several arguments have been proposed around empathy and its relations with morality; the arguments against empathy and their counter arguments have

been simplified in the tables below. Those tables offer a general overview of role of empathy for moral judgements, with a selection of issues having already been touched upon in previous chapters, but also with new ones that will be later used to argue in favour of the role of empathy as an instrument to promote equality.

TABLE 12- Against empathy for moral judgement

Arguments	Against empathy for moral judgements
Too much or too little empathy	• Both can compromise and cloud the impartiality required for moral judgements. • We feel too much empathy for those who endorse our values and reasoning; on the opposite, our empathy is reduced for those who display a different mindset to ours (Song, 2015:439).
Biases	• Our empathy for others is naturally biased; we empathise more with those who are like us or with those who are affectively or physically close to us. • If morality demands impartiality, familiarity and proximity biases are an obstacle to moral judgements (Coplan, 2011:55-56; Printz, 2011: 216; Song, 2015:439).
Empathy inaccuracy	• It can be caused by two types of errors: a) 'error of omission': not enough information is used to determine the perspective of the target; b) 'error of commission': we use our own experiences to determine what others are experiencing (Goldman, 2011: 44; Song, 2015:439). • Both cases can lead to a *wrong* empathy and therefore constitute wobbly grounds for moral judgements.
Anger and guilt	• When empathy is absent, anger and guilt are sufficient for moral judgements; therefore, empathy is not necessary to determine if an action is immoral (Song, 2015:439-440). • For instance, disapprobation (intended as a sentiment or disposition to have certain emotions) can be caused by a deliberation around several types of actions. Disapprobation leads to anger when the actions are performed by others, while guilt arouses when the actions are performed by us (Printz, 2011a: 214-215; Printz, 2011b: 219-221).
Empathy is not a precondition of moral development	• Children learn to discern between bad and good through punishment and imitation; they learn to associate negative emotions with harm without the intervention of empathy. • Several forms of punishment cause suffering: aggressivity imparts fear, depravation imparts sadness, and ostracism imparts shame. All children are inclined to imitation; the sight of an adult outraged at their action will lead them in the future to react the same way when witnessing similar actions (Printz, 2011b: 221-222).

TABLE 12- In favour of empathy for moral judgements

Arguments	In favour of empathy for moral judgements
Properly empathising	• Only proper empathy determines correct moral judgements. 'Proper empathy' stands for perceiving what others are experiencing and as a result experiencing that emotion; therefore, it requires both the cognitive and affective components. (Simmons, 2014: 98-99). For Yujia Song, there are three senses of this type of empathy:

	▪ Correctness and Acuracy; 'proper empathy' means to successfully empathise with someone, i.e. to reach a certain level of accuracy and have the right level of focus on the other person. ▪ Respect of psychological norms, whose end is one's own wellbeing. For instance, preserving the boundaries between us and the target of our empathy avoids becoming vulnerable to their influence and helps keep a *correct/appropriate* point of view on their situation. ▪ Respect of moral norms; properly empathising requires determining when it is appropriate or unfit to use empathy to settle the best course of action. Instances of moral norms are impartiality and self-respect (Song, 2015:441-442).
Biases	• All morally important emotions are subject to biases, not only empathy; therefore, we cannot base our critique of the value of empathy on the influence of biases. • Aaron Simmons's methods to reduce the influence of biases are: a) imagining that strangers are our loved ones or watching videos and reading stories regarding distant people and their misfortune; b) rational arguments remind us that we ought to feel concern for those who surround us and that our concern for them should not affect that expressed for minorities (Simmons, 2014:107).
Epistemic value	• A moral judgement requires correct information about the situation and those involved. Often, knowing what happened to somebody is sufficient to provide them with assistance. • However, most of the time an inner point of view is required to determine what caused the situation and to understand the thoughts and inner states of those involved (for instance, what led them to that situation and how they are going to respond to it). Empathy can have a role in providing an inner point of view, as it entails assuming someone else's perspective. (Song, 2015:443-446). • Empathy is a *parasitic* way of learning about the world: we learn through empathy what the target has acquired through non-empathetic models; for instance; perception, memory, induction, etc. (Slote, 2017: 844-845). • Through empathy we 'humanise individuals' different from us, whose features we would otherwise understand at a superficial or abstract level. We do not only connect with other humans, but with specific ones who differ from us in several aspects such as religion, sexual orientation, race, income, nationality, etc. (Song, 2015:446-449).
Empathy is necessary for moral praise	• Empathy assists us in making justified beliefs on how to act morally right and at the same time acts to motivate us to perform those actions. We know how others feel and we can determine whether this the right course of action (Masto, 2015: 83-85). • We do not only value the outcome of an action but also the reasoning behind it. When we act correctly to avoid punishment, we deserve less praise than we would if we acted out of concern (Masto, 2015: 90). • With empathy, we act on the basis of appropriate moral considerations because we act taking in to account the wellbeing of others (Masto, 2015: 90).

Several figures in the current moral and political debate often refer to empathy and sympathy as instruments to be used to create a better community and improve the quality of life of human beings. I chose two examples: Pope Francis and Barack Obama, who spoke about

empathy in different circumstances, and with a different intent. I will first introduce their quotes, clarify their meaning and connect them with Aristotle's concept of the social animal. For reasons of clarity, I will maintain the use of 'empathy' as intended by the Pope and Obama when commenting on their quotes; however, when this section ends, I will resume my use of the distinction between 'empathy' and 'sympathy' advocated in previous chapters.

The Pope during the meeting with the Asian Bishops:

We are challenged to listen not only to the words which others speak, but to the unspoken communication of their experiences, their hopes and aspirations, their struggles and their deepest concerns. Such empathy must be the fruit of our spiritual insight and personal experience, which lead us to see others as brothers and sisters, and to "hear", in and beyond their words and actions, what their hearts wish to communicate. In this sense, dialogue demands of us a truly contemplative spirit of openness and receptivity to the other. I cannot engage in dialogue if I am closed to others (Pope Francis, 2014).

Obama during the Northwestern graduates Commencement:

There's a lot of talk in this country about the federal deficit. But I think we should talk more about our empathy deficit – the ability to put ourselves in someone else's shoes; to see the world through those who are different from us – the child who's hungry, the laid-off steelworker, the immigrant woman cleaning your dorm room. […] Not only that – we live in a culture that discourages empathy. A culture that too often tells us our principal goal in life is to be rich, thin, young, famous, safe, and entertained. A culture where those in power too often encourage these selfish impulses (Barack Obama, 2006).

The Pope's quote refers to the importance of empathy in communication amongst peers. To him, a *real* dialogue requires that the communicative partners go beyond the words used and pay attention to what others do not say (unspoken communication) to find the real meaning of the dialogue. This unspoken communication that the Pope describes as made up of the communicative partners' experiences, hopes, aspirations and concerns is what enables them to connect with each other and really communicate. The Pope defines this connection caused by communication as empathy: it is what allows us to realise that those who surround are different, but similar in relevant aspects. Despite appearances, we are all equally important and other individuals do not constitute a closed door but people we must reach out to and understand through real dialogue. Obama's quote refers to an *empathy deficit*; it relates to a society in which individuals focus heavily on material issues at the expense of the wellbeing

of those around them, which he feels should be the prime concern. This change in priorities in society, which Obama condemns, is caused by the fact that our culture, whose content is enforced by those in a position of power, pushes us towards selfish goals (Obama listed several examples, amongst which being rich, famous, entertained, etc.) that collide with the empathy we feel for others. As the sirens of the Odyssey enchanted the sailors with their singing, making them forget their children and spouse and preventing them from ever returning home, the power of selfish goals on us is so strong that we forget those who surround us and may need our help and understanding.

Both Pope Francis's and Obama's considerations about empathy and its role in a community somehow match and heighten Aristotle's notion of social animal. For Aristotle, a social animal is someone with the ability of conversing about moral principles and living in a city where life is shared with other human animals. The *Politics* are books in which Aristotle focuses on the administration of the city and explains its salient features. It should be remembered that the political views offered by Aristotle are deeply influenced by the Greek culture of that time and that, therefore, some of his ideas may appear extremely unfair to the modern reader, especially regarding the role of women, foreigners and slaves. Despite these limitations, his idea that we are, by nature, social animals has influenced subsequent literature.

Aristotle asserts that, in nature, everything has a purpose (end or consumption); this applies equally to the city, whose purpose is to create the necessary conditions to pursuing what is identified as good (Aristotle, 2009b: Pol. 1253a1-4). A city of this type requires that citizens can communicate with each other about how they feel and what should be considered just or unjust. Aristotle's city is very similar to that which the Pope and Obama might have in mind when asserting that empathy plays a key role in communication and taking into consideration the life of others. In fact, Aristotle seems to believe it is the physical

composition of the body of human and non-human animals that allows them to communicate when they feel pain or pleasure, and since human animals are equipped with language they are able to discuss their feelings and integrate them into speeches regarding what is good or evil with the aim of establishing what is best for them and the rest of the community (Aristotle, 2009b: Pol. 1253a8-17).

There are different spheres of values (such as ethics, religion, politics and laws) in a community which, when interacting with other values that are considered fundamental to a person's wellbeing, determine the occurrence of certain behaviours. If the community is the action field where its members act, they have an interest in keeping that community in place to satisfy their needs, search for and reach wellbeing. Consequently, the community must be sufficiently flexible and accommodate and integrate different notions of wellbeing but, at the same time, guarantee that these differences remain compatible with each other and that a particular notion of wellbeing does not constrain the wellbeing of those who interpret that notion differently.

Cynthia V. Ward defines 'political empathy' as the empathy used by the community to recognise others as political equals; that is, "to see the essential humanity of those whose race, gender, socioeconomic background, or sexual orientation are different from theirs" (Ward, 1994: 935). The connection between empathy and equality is conceivable only in reference to a community where mechanisms such as values and laws are in place to defend the rights of all members to enjoy the benefits of belonging to that community. In a community of this type, empathy is closely connected to equality: when the empath experiences the suffering caused to the target of their empathy, they will act to prevent further harm. Thus, the target's suffering must be stopped to restore the equality promoted by the community. On the contrary, when a community does not consider all members as equally important, empathy only extends to those individuals the empath considers fit to

enjoy the benefits offered by the community. This is an issue that will emerge again at a later stage: empathy can lead to equality when the value of equality is already engrained through the mechanisms used to protect and sustain the community. However, when society no longer function and does not value the importance of all its members, the same empathy can lead to the restauration of equality and therefore guide a change which, if successful, will lead to the remodelling of the community.

8.3 We are blind people who can see

I will now ascertain whether empathy and the sympathetic actions deriving from it have a role in the preservation of the community and the wellbeing of its members. I will present two cases: the book *Blindness* (1999) by José Saramago (1922-2010) and Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)'s concept of 'banality of evil'.

In *Blindness*, Saramago describes the vicissitudes of a city during the outbreak of an epidemic that causes the whole population to become blind. Although the novel is a fiction, the mechanisms underpinning the behaviours of the characters I have chosen to depict very much reflect the reality of human behaviour. The characters' situation is fictional, but we have all experienced or witnessed identical reactions to difficult situations in real life; this makes the novel and its characters particularly relevant to my assertions. I will begin with summarising the crucial points of the plot, and then proceed with their analysis. The cause of the epidemic is unclear; the only known fact is that those affected see everything white, as if they were suddenly surrounded by a 'milky sea' (Saramago, [1995]1999: 3). At the beginning, the government places those infected in an asylum to avoid mass contamination, but the conditions of life soon become very difficult and individuals in the asylum are forced to make hard choices for their survival. Some patients take advantage of blindness, poor hygiene and food shortages to impose their rule on others, which triggers a wave of violence

that ends only when some of the abused patients set fire to the asylum. In the second part of the book, the focus shifts onto the doctor's wife (Saramago does not use personal names to identify the characters) who is the only person in the asylum still able to see and leads a small group of former patients trying to stay united for survival. The novel ends when all citizens gain back their eyesight and go back to their previous life. In the last page of the book, the doctor's wife and the doctor ask themselves what the cause of this outbreak was, revealing the narrative purpose of the white blindness:

> Why did we become blind? I don't know, perhaps one day we will find out, Do you want me to tell you what I think, Yes, do, I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see (Saramago, [1995]1999: 326).

Saramago's white blindness is a narrative expedient used by the author to point out that we do not live alone in a community (or a city in the case of *Blindness*). Instead, we are surrounded by other individuals who, with us, constitute the foundations on which the community stands. According to Saramago, in our everyday life, we are "blind people who can see, but do not see": although we acknowledge the presence of others, this often remains superficial and is aimed at achieving a selfish end.

8.3.1 The car thief's evil sympathy

The metaphor of blindness is articulated through the behaviours of the characters in the book. I will focus on two specifically: the car thief and the wife's doctor, who personify two opposite reactions to the new condition of blindness.

When the first blind man suddenly finds himself blind while waiting for the traffic light to become green, a thief (the car thief) takes advantage of the situation and accompanies the first blind man home with the purpose of stealing his car. In this case, the car thief has noticed that the first blind man needs help and uses this information to his advantage; he saw that the man needed help but did not see far enough to actually help him. The car thief's decision

to steal the automobile can originate in two different types of practical reasoning. The first one is based on empathy: the car thief has identified the first blind man's feelings and situation and uses this knowledge to commit the crime, damaging the sightless and benefitting from it. The car thief's behaviour can be classified as evil sympathy since he acted with the knowledge provided by his empathy with an end most of us would consider evil. The second one is based on a superficial or *instrumental* knowledge; in this case, the car thief is a professional thief who does not empathically engage with the first blind man because he has previously ripped off other victims and is used to spotting and taking advantage of other people's weaknesses without having to first empathically connect with them.

The two types of reasoning differ, although the outcome is identical: the first blind man becomes an instrument that facilitates the realisation of a purpose. However, the explanation based on empathy turns the first blind man into an instrument or a target of evil sympathy only after the car thief has *grasped* (empathically) the first blind man. Instead, in the practical reasoning based on instrumental knowledge, the conjecture on the first blind man's utility leads to the acquisition of the necessary details to steal the car; there is no empathy involved. Given Saramago's description of the car thief, it is possible to assert with certainty that his actions are based upon empathy and not instrumental knowledge:

> On offering to help the blind man, the man who then stole his car, had not, at the precise moment, had any evil intention, quite the contrary, what he did was nothing more than to obey those feelings of generosity and altruism […]. It was only when he got close to the blind man's home that the idea came to him quite naturally [...](Saramago, [1995]1999: 16).

Saramago says that the car thief's decision to help the first blind man originated in a sentiment of generosity and altruism; we can speculate that his good deed towards the first blind man originates in the empathy felt for him, as he wants to relieve this person from a sense of bewilderment and fear caused by the sudden blindness. I define those actions as good sympathy because they are rooted in the empathy we feel for someone and are aimed

at improving the condition of the target. However, immediately after he got behind the wheel of the first blind man's car, the car thief's good sympathy wobbles and evil sympathy takes over, tempting him with the promise of a new car and a crime that will remain unpunished.

In Saramago's description of the theft, the car thief does not seem to be a professional who has committed several thefts, but someone who takes advantage of the situation experienced by the first blind man and who cannot stop himself from committing a crime even when his empathy and moral consciousness tell him to act differently. I asserted in chapters V and VI that empathy is an emotion which consists in connecting with another person; in itself, this emotion does not have any moral or ethical value. However, it contradicts moral and ethics when the information acquired from the empathic target is used by the empath to act in an evil manner towards them. Therefore, there are cases, such as that of the car thief, where empathy does not necessary lead to a positive outcome. However, the connection between empathy and morality can be strengthened depending on several factors, amongst which: the personality and previous experiences of the empath, the relationship between the empath and the target, the environment or conditions in which empathy takes place and, most importantly, an education that aims at recognising the emotions and act positively in light of the empathy felt.

8.3.2 The doctor's wife's good sympathy

After analysing evil sympathy with the figure of the car thief, I will now present another case in Saramago's book to elucidate the role of empathy in good sympathy. As set out earlier, the white blindness is a metaphor used to depict cases in which we do not *see* other individuals as equally important. In the novel, the doctor's wife is the only character not affected by this condition. Whilst the doctor's wife's ability to see might, at first glance, appear as a stroke of luck, it soon becomes a curse.

The doctor's wife, although not infected, decides to follow her husband into the asylum to ensure his safety. Inside the asylum, she pretends to be blind and provides care for her husband and a small group of people, trying her best to ensure a dignified life for all of them. As the food rations issued by the government diminish, a group of patients steals all the supplies and asks other patients for valuables (such as money and jewellery) in exchange for food. The patients accept the unfair conditions imposed, but the situation worsens as they run out of valuables and the oppressors demand sexual favours in exchange of food. The women, driven by hunger, once again accept the demands of the oppressors, until the doctor's wife, who witnessed with her own eyes the harassment of patients, kills the head of the oppressors with a pair of scissors. The assassination leads to a bloody revolt that ends with the patients escaping the asylum.

In the novel, the doctor's wife's retained ability to see is used to improve the situation of those who surround her. Thus, she is not blind because when she looks at the other patients; she does not see them as instruments to be used to improve her and her husband's life, but considers them as equals suffering the same misery. This interpretation finds support in the second part of the novel, where the doctor's wife leads a small group of former patients and accommodates them in the house in which she and her husband lived before the blindness outbreak. She facilitates the group's life in the house and attends to all until they regain their sight. The practical reason pushing the doctor's wife to help the whole group and not only her husband can be traced back into the dialogue where she invites the whole group to stay at her house:

> […] let us not forget that that was our life during the time when we were interned, we went down all the steps of indignity, all of them, until we reached total degradation, the same might happen here albeit in a different way, there we still had the excuse that the degradation belonged to someone else, not now, now we are all equal regarding good and evil, please, don't ask me what good and what evil are, we knew what it was each time we had to act when blindness was an exception, what is right and what is wrong are simply different ways of understanding our relationship with others […] I am not a queen, no, I am simply the one who was born to see this horror, you can feel it, I both feel and see it […] No

> one asked any question, the doctor simply said, if I ever regain my sight again, I shall look carefully at the eyes of others, as if I were looking into their souls, Their souls, asked the old man with the eyepatch, Or their minds, the name does not matter, it was then that, surprisingly, if we consider that we are dealing with a person without much education, the girl with the dark glasses said, Inside us there is something that has no name, that something is what we are (Saramago, [1995]1999: 276).

The doctor's wife recalls their quarantine period inside the asylum; squalid conditions, shortage of food and physical as well as sexual abuse stripped them of their dignity. At the asylum, the patients were still not equal, although all were experiencing distressing living conditions: the women were subject to sexual violence in exchange for food rations for themselves and the other patients. According to the doctor's wife, the women's physical and psychological pain resulted in a higher level of suffering and violation of their dignity than that experienced by other patients. However, the doctor's wife suffered the most as her sight allowed her to better reconstruct the perspective of other patients and truly understand their suffering through the empathy she feels. In contrast, the other characters are not used to being blind and have difficulties adjusting to this condition; they are less aware of what surrounds them, although this should not constitute a justification for the lack of empathy they might have towards others.

The situation of the group inside the house differs from that inside the asylum in that the group is now free from the rules of the asylum and finally has the chance to agree upon a new group dynamic. The doctor's wife says that they are now all equals and the other characters feel the need to be seen as human beings again. In fact, they agree that if they regain their sight, they will pay attention to the soul or mind of others because it is what makes us who we are.

8.3.3 Empathy leading to equality

My examination of Saramago's novel addressed the figure of the car thief and the doctor's wife with the purpose of introducing the role of empathy in practical reasoning. Moreover,

I asserted that empathy leads to equality in the sense that, when exposed to the suffering or joys of others, we realise that their feelings are no different to those we experience; this is the object of the following section.

In the case of the car thief, I explained that the theft of the car might be caused by two types of practical reasoning: a) the car thief exploits the situation of the first blind man basing his action on the assumption that he is an instrument that facilitates the achievement of a goal (having a car); b) the car thief exploits the situation of the first blind man basing his action on his empathy for him, and then using the connection established with him to exploit his situation (evil sympathy). Instead, the doctor's wife's actions are based on empathy that pushes her not only to take care of her blind husband, but also to help a group of people undergoing to the same type of suffering as him (good sympathy). I will justify at a later stage that the thief and the doctor's wife's actions were based on empathy. For the moment, let us assume this premise and call their actions sympathy because they have consequences such as a change in the situation or emotional state of the target of their empathy.

I already anticipated that empathy itself does not have any ethical or moral value; the empathy we feel for others does not necessarily result in any attempt to improve the life of that person. Often, we feel empathy for someone yet do not act in accordance with it or, even worse, we use the connection established to take advantage of a person. For this reason, I believe that empathy as an emotion does not have any ethical or moral value, but that this emotion can be part of the practical reason that guides us to act in a good or evil manner. The difference I made between empathy and sympathy is crucial: it explains that empathy does not automatically lead to compassionate action. However, I propose that when empathy impacts on our practical reasoning, we see others as equally important and we are less likely to act in an evil manner against them.

8.4 The banality of evil: Eichmann's case

I will now further develop my view concerning the effect of empathy on our practical reasoning, and borrow Arendt's concept of 'banality of evil' to support the crucial role of empathy in supporting good actions and equality. The 'banality of evil' was first used by Arendt to explain the crimes against humanity perpetrated by Nazi officials against European Jews. In 1961, Arendt witnessed and reported on Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem for *The New Yorker*. The atrocities Eichmann perpetrated differ from the situation in Saramago's *Blindness* in the sense that Nazism established a community where inequality was institutionalised and enforced through moral and legal systems. Background on Eichmann's personality, his involvement and actions in the Nazi regime will support my analysis of Arendt's concept of the banality of evil.

Eichmann was accused of crimes against Jews under the Nazi regime, and in particular during the events of the Second World War (Arendt, [1963]2006: 21). Arendt reports that Eichmann did not deny being aware of the consequences of his actions: he was in charge of the logistics of the deportation of the Jewish population and would have had a guilty conscience only if he had not executed the orders imposed upon him (Arendt, [1963]2006: 25).

Eichmann's assertions regarding his blind obedience to the laws are in contrast with the fact that he was certified as 'normal' by several psychiatrists, and did not show any sign of hatred for the Jews, anti-Semitism or indoctrination (Arendt, [1963]2006: 25-26). Eichmann's obedience to the system was motivated by reasons which Arendt explains by referring to the events that characterised his life. Arendt describes him as a man who did not show any talent at a young age, and was not hard working at school (Arendt, [1963]2006: 28). After being employed for a short period as miner, Eichmann started his career as a salesman and, in 1932, entered the National Socialist Party and the S.S. (Arendt, [1963]2006:

28-31). Arendt asserts that Eichmann did not join the party because he subscribed to its ideology: when asked to explain his choice, he referred to hackneyed motivations such as the injustice caused by the Treaty of Versailles and unemployment (Arendt, [1963]2006: 33). His decision to join the Nazi party and the S.S. was fuelled by his ambition and hope to make a career for himself: he had no interest in his job as a salesman and was keen to demonstrate he was not a failure (Arendt, [1963]2006: 33).

Arendt's hypothesis that Eichmann joined the S.S. for career prospects and not values finds support in the fact that, during the trial, he often referred to slogans or *clichés* to describe the events that brought him to power. On several occasions, Arendt remarks that Eichmann exhibited an unreliable memory and that the *clichés* to which he had recourse were often inconsistent. For instance, in reference to the end of the war he asserted: "I will jump to my grave laughing" and: "I shall gladly hang myself in public as a warning example for all anti-Semites on this earth" (Arendt, [1963]2006: 53). According to Arendt, Eichmann's inconsistencies and contradictions are a sign of the fact that he did not subscribe to the rules of the S.S. for their values, but because of blind obedience to a system which promised quick social upward mobility and an otherwise unattainable life style. Eichmann acted much like a weather vane which, moved by the strongest wind, follows the jet stream. Once that stream weakens and another one arises to take its place, the weather vane shifts towards a new direction without ever looking back.

In fact, Arendt postulates that Eichmann never had hard feelings for his victims and did not keep this a secret (Arendt, [1963]2006: 30); this again is an indication of the fact that Eichmann interpreted his job in the S.S. as a regular occupation, much like his former career as a miner or salesman. In the S.S., he followed orders as he did in his previous jobs, and this unquestioning obedience was largely caused by his desire to become a respected, financially well-off person. It is this that ensured his obedience to the Nazi regime and

prevented him from empathically understanding how his actions were affecting the victims of that system.

In reference to the last moments of Eichmann's life, Arendt finally explains the type of evil he committed and, in doing so, coined an expression that became the title of her book:

> It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us – the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil* (Arendt, [1963]2006: 252).

Arendt uses 'banality of evil' to indicate those actions intended to cause harm to others and that are perpetrated by individuals who, although aware of the implications of their actions, still choose to act in an 'evil' way because they blinded by a certain goal (social status in the case of Eichmann, but another goal could be to do one's job properly, to be respected and accepted by others, etc.). The quest for the achievement of those goals pushes individuals not to question any type of authority or assignment despite the evil or immoral character of the behaviours they are asked to adopt and which they may, in normal circumstances, have recognised.

The type of evil described by Arendt has been subject to several experiments such as those conducted by Stanley Milgram (1933-1084), who draws inspiration from totalitarian regimes to assess what people experience when the orders given by individuals in a position of power are in contrast with an individual's values and beliefs. Those experiments focus on the obedience to rules or orders that are considered unfair. However, in Eichmann's case, his actions were not rooted in his fear of disobedience to the Nazi regime, but in the fact that his obedience to the orders could grant him a social status and welfare that would have otherwise been out of reach for him. Thus, Eichmann was aware of the consequences of his actions, but the pain inflicted upon the victims did not constitute a cause of concern for him because that was part of the job he was appointed to do by the S.S.

8.4.1 Inequality behind Eichmann's actions

In my reconstruction of the concept of banality of evil formulated by Arendt, I have focused on the fact that Eichmann accepted the rules of the S.S. not because he was afraid of disobeying, but because joining the S.S. constituted a career opportunity for him. However, Arendt's main concern seems to be more focused on the fact that Eichmann committed evil actions without having first morally assessed those actions; crimes such as Eichmann's are the result of an adherence to rules of conduct that transform human nature, erase spontaneous acts and demand blind obedience (Vetlesen, 1994: 88). Following Arendt's reasoning, Eichmann's last spontaneous act was to join the S.S.; after this point, it was the Nazi regime that decided for him what was evil or good and therefore determined how he should act. The individuals who are part of the regime no longer see themselves as single moral subjects but as an exchangeable part of a bigger body (Vetlesen, 1994: 90).

Arendt says that the blind obedience to the system has consequences for both its victims and executioners:

> Just as the victims in the death factories or the holes of oblivion are no longer human in the eyes of their executioners, so this newest species of criminals is beyond the pale even of solidarity in human sinfulness (Arendt, [1951]1958: 459).

The executioners carry out the orders without feeling any remorse because they do not see their victims as human beings worthy of equal treatment. At the same time, the rules to which the executioners have adhered render them no longer human since their (evil) actions are not preceded by any practical reasoning, much like zombies or robots who do not exercise control over their actions because those actions are imposed upon them by an irrepressible desire (flesh) or a programming code. Thus, due to the process of behaviour standardisation carried out by the regime, individuals stop seeing themselves as singular, with peculiarities that make them differ from others; they begin to consider themselves as replaceable as their job can be carried out by others.

I need not further enquire on the connection between totalitarian regimes, the banality of evil and moral judgments. Although this is central the understanding of Arendt's philosophy, my reference to her argumentation was justified by her reconstruction of Eichmann's case as a good example of a behaviour that lacks in empathy towards others. As asserted previously, Arendt's portrait of Eichmann depicts a man who no longer exercises a practical judgment on what is good or evil because those decisions are already made for him by the Nazi regime which controls the life of those who are part of it with the promise of a good life and social respect.

The lack of empathy exhibited by Eichmann towards his victims is due to him not considering them as equals: they are objects or second-class individuals whose fate falls under the jurisdiction of the regime, and is blindly executed by *bureaucrats* such as Eichmann. Arendt sees the influence (or fear) of the regime as the leading cause of the banality of evil; however, her writings also point to another, far more interesting explanation which would also elucidate cases of banal evil where evil actions are not encouraged and institutionalised by a political regime: self-interest. I here use 'self-interest' in reference to those behaviours, desires or practical reasoning that consider exclusively one's own advantage or interest without considering any other individual or how they might be affected. I already analysed two examples of self-interest that result in a lack of empathy: the car thief who takes advantage of the first blind man's situation to steal his car, and Eichmann's desire for social status and power pushing him to accept and execute the rules imposed by the Nazi regime. In both cases, the practical reasoning does not take into account other people as equally important: they are considered as objects or instruments to be used towards the achievement of a certain target.

Now, let's suppose that philosophers such as Sartre and Aristotle are correct in believing that morality relies on individual choices, and that the ability to choose right becomes more

refined through experience. Assuming this assumption is correct, the agent acting will be recognised as responsible for their actions; once they apply certain values dictated by a moral system, they agree or disagree on their content according to their own perspective or experience. The terms 'perspective' and 'experience' highlight that, when we decide how to best act, we are engaging all those elements that make us a particular individual and not someone else. This is, I suppose, the reason that pushed Arendt to consider Eichmann's actions as banal: he only followed orders without reflecting on their content and without deciding for himself whether he agreed or disagreed with them.

Even if factors such as values, systems of belief, culture, religion, moral codes, laws, etc. influence the choices we make, we are responsible for the way we act because we are the ones deciding whether to obey or challenge the content of those factors and the actions that derive from it. From the perspective of the functioning of the community, it is not important why its members accept that treating others as equals is essential for the community, the only thing that matters is that this content is accepted and taken in consideration when its members decide how to act. The community makes use of several mechanisms to ensure that what is trusted as beneficial for the community is preserved; take for instance the two quotes of Obama and Pope Francis where they appeal to empathy to increase social cohesion and reinforce the belief that we are all equally important. At the beginning of the chapter, I asked whether empathy and sympathy might have a role inside a community. The answer is positive as it is through empathy (whether it is cognitive or empathy as an emotion) that we experience the perspective of others and realise that even those who might appear very different from us are not so different.

Empathy and sympathy alone cannot create equality, but they can cooperate with the mechanisms that are usually adopted by the community to ensure that what is considered beneficial is preserved. Altogether, they can create an environment where everyone is free

to pursue their wellbeing without preventing others from doing the same, but also by providing support for those who need it. However, as Obama points out, once the reinforcement mechanisms no longer preserve what is beneficial (take as instances both Saramago's book and Eichmann's case) empathy can have a leading role in reminding us that we are all equally important and the values that conflict with it should be pushed aside through sympathetic actions. Empathy is the only emotion through which we can grasp what others are experiencing. We can never fully understand what others feel because private feelings only belong to a specific individual; however, empathy enables us to come close to this and to recreate and experience the perspective of others. Empathy, therefore, must be educated through experience, so that building a contact bridge between us and those who might appear different requires less work from the community preservation mechanisms and more from us that we accept others as equally important because we feel (empathically) that they are so. In this regard, *Blindness* of Saramago hits the nail on the head: the metaphor of blindness takes place in a context where the values and laws of the community are no longer protected by preservation mechanisms, and each member must rely only on themselves to decide how to act and ensure their wellbeing. The doctor's wife helps the blind people not because she is forced to by external factors, but because she feels empathy for those people; this emotion leads her to seek to reduce their suffering.

As already stated in the introduction and throughout the thesis, my study of empathy aimed to define whether empathy is an emotion by comparing the two phenomena and identifying the aspects that lead to empathy as part of the emotions group. My work has not only provided a definition of empathy justifying the reasoning which led me to consider it as an emotion, but I also offered a description that can be applied to subjects other than philosophy of mind. In fact, my description of empathy shed light on the reasons why we feel what others feel, the physical and mental causes for the arousal of empathy, and the

actions which can derive from it. I asserted that empathy and morality do not form an unbreakable bond but that, where this is reinforced in a society, empathy can lead to equality. With empathy, we grasp others: we do not only understand what they feel, but also share their emotions.

8.5 Summary

I argued in this chapter that a community is the context in which individuals search for and try to reach wellbeing. To function and avoid conflicts, the community must ensure that all members are regarded as equally important; this foundation is enshrined in several types of mechanisms such as beliefs, religion, culture, moral codes, laws, etc. Those mechanisms contribute to the creation of a system of rights and duties that guarantee that all members can enjoy the benefits of being part of a community. However, those mechanisms alone cannot guarantee the functioning of the community because if a tragedy occurs (like in the case described by the novel of Saramago or something more realistic, such as the creation of a social system that denies equal importance to its members), the members can no longer rely on those mechanisms to guarantee their wellbeing. In cases of this type, the members take upon themselves the responsibility to ensure that all are considered equal and, in doing so, empathy will prove its use. Thus, empathy is the final but also most powerful mechanism that the community adopts to sustain itself: it allows the members to agree that they are all equally important and thus preserves this foundation.

If, on the one hand, empathy proves itself useful to the sustainability of the community, it is also beneficial for the members who will abide by community rules not for fear of social stigma or penalties, but because they agree with their function and purpose. Moreover, they will benefit from the empathy others feel for them, which will ensure they have a right to be

part of the community and to have those benefits preserved even when the community struggles to stay in place.

Conclusion

In the course of this thesis, I attempted to ascertain whether empathy can be conceived as an emotion. Taking in to consideration both empirical and philosophical literature, I determined that, in order to tackle the issue at stake, I first needed to define what an emotion is; I then compared this definition with that of empathy to establish whether empathy possesses the same features of an emotion.

The first part of my work consisted in reviewing several theories of emotions, focusing in greater detail on the cognitive and feeling theories. The review of these theories allowed me to outline their positive points and downsides, and informed my definition of emotions as the awareness of the somatic and cognitive changes caused by our interaction with the outside and inside worlds. These changes require a representation of the target of the emotion, i.e. the formulation of evaluative judgment(s) (some authors use the term 'appraisals') to collect and aggregate the information necessary to the characterisation of the target. The target's representation involves sensory experiences, previous emotions, desires, etc., which resurface as feelings and determine the shape of the representation. Therefore, physical changes are both caused by the evaluative judgment(s) and decisive in their formulation. What we have felt previously exerts an influence on what we will feel in the future.

The role of emotions is to facilitate prompt responses; they constitute a quick way of establishing a relation with a target, and therefore of determining the best course of actions. For instance, the triggering of fear allows an organism to be aware of danger and plan how to escape, defeat, or avoid the threat. Emotions can be considered as rational because, guided by cognition (evaluation about a target), they assist us in determining how to act, but also

because they can mutate over time in light of experience, education, or our interaction with specific targets.

Although some argue the existence and features of basic emotions (for instance, joy, distress, anger, fear, surprise and disgust) common to all human beings has been crafted throughout the evolution process, others assert that our way of expressing our emotions and the way we feel for specific targets is determined by factors such as culture, society, language, beliefs, personality, etc.

In the second part of my thesis, I defined empathy as the connection established with those who are the target of our empathy. When we feel empathy for someone, we connect with them through enacting (simulating) what they are experiencing. Empathy requires both simulating what others experience and understanding what leads them to a particular emotional status. The hypothesis that we can simulate what others experience has been advocated by reference to the discovery of specific brain areas which, together, constitute the empathy circuit. When those areas are aroused, they enable us to enact the emotional status of other individuals.

Feeling empathy involves a representation of the target. This representation is caused by evaluative judgment(s) through which we gather the information necessary to reconstruct the perspective of the other person. The way the pieces of information will be assembled depends on the personality of the empath, their previous experiences and emotions, memories, beliefs, culture and language, etc. The representation of the target leads to physical and cognitive changes that mirror what the target is experiencing. Therefore, when we feel empathy for someone, for instance, the anger felt will be the result of our empathy and not empathy itself.

As shown throughout the thesis, empathy (intended as both understanding and simulating

others'persectives) can legitimately fit into the category of emotions. In fact, the experience of emotions and empathy relies upon the somatic and cognitive changes caused by the representation of a target. With empathy, contrary to other emotions, the changes elicited correspond to those of the target; this is a remarkably unique feature.

The major difficulty in accepting the possibility that empathy is an emotion and not a skill lies in that empathy is generally divided into cognitive and affective empathy. However, in the case of empathy, I consider both cognitive and affective components to be constitutive of the emotion. Therefore, although empathy makes use of skills to acquire the information necessary to reconstruct and simulate the target's perspective, those skills do not constitute empathy itself, but rather the instruments adopted to grab the target. Moreover, the skills used in empathy are not exclusive to that emotion, and this has never led to the assertion that emotions and skills are the same thing.

Another potential difficulty is that my definition of empathy as an emotion considers both cognitive and affective empathy as crucial for the arousal of empathy; therefore, those who are not able to experience both components due to physical and mental impairments will be left out from experiencing this emotion. How should their empathy then be classified? In the case of those able to experience only cognitive empathy, the affective side is missing; therefore, their empathy is just a deliberate judgment about a target which does not lead to any affective response. On the contrary, when only affective empathy is in working condition and cognitive empathy is lacking, empathy assumes the shape of a contagion: the person simulates another individual's feelings without being aware of what led them to the emotional reaction.

Federico Franzina (Figure 3, following page) well summarises my assertion that empathy as emotion involves both cognitive and somatic changes.

FIGURE 3- Grabbing the other, empathy as an emotion (F. Franzina)

In the picture, Aristotle's familiar face symbolises the features of empathy. While the brain and the heart represent the cognitive and physical changes, the cables, plugs and lightbulbs suggest that empathy operates like a circuit. The flowers are used by the artist to indicate that we are born with the physical and cognitive capacities to feel empathy. However, much like a flower needs light and nutrients to grow, empathy requires a social context and values to flourish. Promoting familiarity with empathy will help individuals learn how to best act upon what they feel. Lastly, the use of Aristotle's face is not casual but should be considered as a reference to his theory of emotions, which attributes great value to the sensitive faculty.

As already stated through the course of the thesis, unfolding what empathy is and whether it possesses the characteristics of an emotion has implications beyond the boundaries of philosophy of mind. Clarifying the nature of empathy while considering the empirical literature means building a stable ground on which to base future speculation. Empathy does not only feature prominently in debates on how to act with the needs and interests of others in mind; it is ever more present in discussions regarding the development of new technologies.

In the last twenty years, there has been a drastic increase in the use of technology as a means of preserving and establishing relationships with others, making new experiences or learning new skills. In this digitalised world, empathy is revolutionising the way we relate to technology: from chatbots designed to interact with human beings, share their emotions and comfort them when needed, to virtual reality goggles allowing us to assume our favourite character's perspective. Emotions run high regarding what effects this will have on human beings: are new technologies such as the above likely to increase our empathy range, or will they damage it? How will this affect the manner in which we interact with other human beings? Time will tell, but a cyberpunk universe such as the one described by Dick may be closer than we think. In the meantime, a clear definition of empathy such as the one I

attempted to achieve might help to disentangle the issue of how technology will affect empathy, and what repercussions this may have on human interactions both outside and inside the digitised world. Moreover, the dichotomy I highlighted between empathy and sympathy will be of great interest to determine whether *cyber* empathy is likely to prompt charitable actions towards those in need (good sympathy), or if we are to become less sensitive to empathy and use information about another person's emotional status to our own advantage (evil sympathy).

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