***Abstract:*** Regarding skeptical doubts about the external world, Kant turns from the approach of dialectical illusion in the Dialectic to the Refutation of Idealism in the Analytic, missing an antinomy of Other Minds, which is considered here. Taking a clue from Hume, who once aroused Kant from his dogmatic slumbers, the way back to the transcendental aesthetic, and the basis of experience of the other is found in the a priori experience of respect, the empirical experience of a vicarious feeling, and a multi step recovery of the communicability of affect, combined with the concept of the other. Even if vicarious feelings are not an ontological bridge between first-person and third-person perspectives, they are at least an experiential thread knitting together our shared joys and suffering. Thus, the proud name of a proof of other minds gives way to a modest analysis of interhuman relations.

## *Back to Kant: In Search of an Experience of the Other*

From a Kantian perspective, vicarious experience falls squarely within the realm of the transcendental aesthetic and enables a person to assert, "I know what the other is feeling because I feel it too." This does not mean that I have direct access to the sensation that the other is feeling, confusing the first-person with the third. It means that I have a vicarious experience of what the other is experiencing. Through vicarious feeling her pleasure is immediately available in her smile, his anger, in his tirade. The point is that there is a special form of receptivity corresponding to our experience of the other, vicarious experience, though Kant does not call it out explicitly. This experience is a paradigm, often overlooked, and which a more thorough phenomenology of experience usefully brings to the foreground.

In purely Kantian terms, we are open to the experience of the other because we share at the level of the transcendental aesthetic the only two available forms of intuition, space and time. Within those two forms of intuition, I capture the expression of emotions manifested by the other individual. The extent to which this requires the general communicability of the content of intuition, sensation, as well as the assumption that our sense organs are alike, will be discussed further below. For the moment it is sufficient to assert that, within these forms, we have access to vicarious experiences of the other which becomes a paradigm experience intermediate between the self and the other, even is such is not explicitly called out in Kant.

We now have available, as a result of this work, a form of experience corresponding to the other, which, now that we have cleared away the dialectical illusion can enable one person to have a rich experience of what the other is experiencing and make a valid knowledge claim, albeit from the perspective of empirical realism. In the case of other minds, limits exist that constrain my concept of other minds, limits to a person's experience; but such limits are not of a

noumenal kind. The limits are of a kind that arises from the contingency of my experience as spatio-temporal individual. Our forms of experience as individuals are spatio-temporal.

## *Objection and Answer: This is so Much Philosophical Anthropology*

One may object that, from a Kantian perspective, this is just so much philosophical anthropology where Kant points out:

If we are supposed to put our trust in someone, no matter how highly he comes recommended to us, we first look him in the face, especially in the eyes, so as to search out what we can expect from him.[1]

Indeed the subtitle of the second part of Kant's *Anthropology* is "On How to Discern Man's Inner Self from His Exterior." But what raises the discussion above the level of the anthropological is that there is an experience of the other that is pure and unadulterated by empirical experience. This is similar to how one must get beyond using a carpenters square edge, yard stick, and level to perceive a right angle, line segment, or plane in pure geometry. We do have a pure a priori experience of the other; but it is not necessarily obvious. I know the other exists as a source of spontaneity that impacts me because, as an example of the moral law that thwarts my self-love, the other causes my pain:

> For all inclination and every sensuous impulse is based on feeling, and the negative effect on feeling (through the check on the inclinations) is itself feeling. Consequently . . . the moral law . . . by thwarting all our inclinations must produce a feeling which can be called pain. Here we have the first and perhaps the only case wherein we can determine from a prior concepts the relation of a cognition [*Erkenntnis*] (here a cognition of pure practical reason) to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. . . . Thus is respect for the moral law a feeling. . . this feeling is the only one which we can know [*erkennen*] completely a priori and the necessity of which we can discern.[2]

In a reversal of the maxim that knowledge is limited to make room for faith, a practical implementation of a feeling of pleasure or displease comes to the support of our knowledge of

[1] I. Kant, *Anthropology* (1798/1800), tr. M.J. Gregor, Hague: Nijhoff, 1974, p. 161, AA 296.
[2] I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), tr. L. W. Beck, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956: 75; *KpV*, AA 05: 128f. Denn alle Neigung und jeder sinnlich Antrieb ist auf Gefühl gegründet, and die negative Wirkund aufs Gefühl (durch den Abbruch, der den Neigungen geschieht) ist selbst Gefühl. Folglich können wir a priori einsehen, dass das moralische Gesetz als Bestimmungsgrund des Willens, dadurch dass es allen unseren Neigungen Eintrag tut, ein Gefühl bewirken müsse, welches Schmerz genannt warden kann, und hier haben wir nun den ersten, viellich auch einzigen Fall, da wir aus Begriffen a priori das Verhältnis einer Erkenntnis (hier ist es einer reiner praktischen Vernunft) zum Gefühl der Lust oder Unlust bestimmen konnten. . . . Also ist Achtung fürs moralische Gesetz ein Gefühl. . . dieses Gefühl ist das einzige, welches wir völlig a priori erkennen, und dessen Notwendigkeit wir einsehen können.

the other person in a practical cognition. This is a surprising turn around of the attempt to know that the other is in pain. I know that the other experiences pain because he causes my pain as an example of the moral law and I can do the same to him. The pain, which turns out to be occasioned by respect, creates a clearing for the exchange of all kinds of common and uncommon feelings by blasting away the interests of the dear self.

For Kant human relations has an irreducibly moral dimension, but not in the narrow sense of judging and evaluating the other's behavior in its minute idiosyncrasies and peculiarities. Rather in the practical sense of a concept that determines experience of respect towards others, abstracting from all the contingent circumstances, the conflicts of interest and self-interests that shape and bias a person's perceptions, inclinations, and judgments. The suggestion is that every vicarious experience of the other has at its kernel a nucleus of respect for the other, a (dis)interested openness to what is going on "over there" that leaves the other complete and whole in the other person's own experience in the knowledge he or she is not alone.

## *Three Steps: Evidence of the Communicability of Affect in Kant*

It is an extension of Kant's analysis, but a plausible one that the experience of respect at the kernel of my entire contingent vicarious experiences of the other that raises the encounter with the other from an empirical to an a priori transcendental level. There is no other non-circular evidence of the a priori givenness of the other than the respect that I experience for the other person. On that I can build a whole world of interhuman experiences, granted dong so will require plunging back into the rich diversity of experiences in anthropology, based on the experience of the other in respect.

However, is there any textual evidence that Kant acknowledges the possibility of the communicability of a sensation of pain or an affect as a vicarious experience (the latter a key input to empathy and granted that the latter term is not called out)? Once again for Kant the question of other minds does not arise due to our intrinsic sociability. But if it were to arise (condition contrary to fact), then Kant would be able to disentangle the communicated affect based on

> . . . *Sociability*, as a requisite for man as a being destined for society, and so as a property belonging to *humanity*, we cannot escape from regarding taste as a faculty for

> judging everything in respect of which we can communicate our *feeling* to all other men…[3]

Unfortunately, for my purpose, one cannot get directly from taste to the communication of a contingent feeling, sensation, emotion, or experience of charm. On the contrary, Kant's goal is precisely to raise up the disinterested, universal, (un)purposive operation of taste while pushing down the operation of the emotions in common religious enthusiasm, popular culture, or fine arts. Kant's approach to the emotions receives significant exposition in the *Critique of Judgment*, where emotions [*Rührungen*] and its charms [*Reize*] are subordinated to the disinterested, universal communicability of pleasure in the judgments of taste (and the sublime) where

> . . . [T]he imagination in its freedom awakens the understanding and is put by it into regular play, without the aid of concepts, does the representation communicate itself, not as a thought, but as an internal feeling of a purposive state of the mind.
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> Taste is then the faculty of judging a prior of the communicability of feelings that are bound up with a given representation (without the mediation of a concept) (Kant, 1790/93: 138; 161).[4]

From the perspective of Kant and other minds, my argument is *not* that taste is required to access other minds. Far from it. Three steps are needed to disentangle taste from the communication of feeling and find a separate basis for vicarious experience that is completely separate from taste, though indirectly related to it. First, taste has to be disentangled from the communication of feeling and a separate ability to communicate feeling established. This happens by associating taste with common sense. Next, common sense has to be invoked independently of taste to communicate feelings. Finally, the concept of the other has to be brought back in and this done within the discussion of common sense.

First, Kant attempts to associate taste with common sense in §40 "Of taste as a Kind of *Sensus Communis*." This association falls short of identification, since everyday talk uses the technical term "*sensus communis*" in its own vague way as the healthy, yet common,

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[3] I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790/93), tr. J. H. Bernard, New York: Hafner, 1968: 139; AA 162f: ". . . *Geselligkeit*, zure Erfordernis des Menschen als für die Gesellschaft bestimmten Geschöpfs, also als zur *Humanität* gehörige Eigenschaft einräumt, so kann es nicht fehlen, dass man nicht auch den Geschmack als ein Beurteilungvermögen alles dessn, wodurch man sogar sein *Gefühl* jedem anderen metteilen kann . . ."

[4] "Nur da, wo Einbildungskraft in ihrer Freiheit den Verstand erweckt, und dieser ohne Begriff die Einbildungskraft in ein regelmässiges Spiel versetzt, da teilt sich die Vorstellung, nicht als Gedanke, sondern als inneres Gefühl eines zweckmässigen Zustandes des Gemüts mit. Der Geschmack ist also das Vermögen, die Mitteilbarkeit der Gefühle, welche mit gegebener Vorstellung (ohne Vermittelung eines Begriffs) verbunden sind, a priori zu beurteilen."

understanding of the everyday person in the street. In a revision to the common person's way of speaking, Kant proposes distinguishing an aesthetic common sense from a logical one: "We may designate taste as *sensus communis aestheticus*, common understanding as *sensus communis logicus*" (Kant, 1790/93: 138ftnt.; AA 146ftnt.).[5] Kant proposes making taste function out of that part of our common sense "that which makes universally communicable without the mediation of a concept, our feeling in a given representation" (Kant 1790/93: 138; AA 160).[6] A rich philosophical history is in play here with the *sensus communis* as the *sensorium* where all the five senses are integrated. Kant perhaps alludes to this in an earlier discussion (Section 30) "Of the Communicability of a Sensation" where he notes:

> If sensation, as the real in perception, is related to knowledge, it is called sensation of the senses; and its specific quality may be represented as generally communicable in a uniform way, if we assume that everyone has senses like our own (Kant, 1790/93: 133f.; AA 153).[7]

Kant does indeed question whether our senses are as alike as the common person believes, what with diversity in the sense of smell, sight, etc. However, this is precisely the kind of thing where training, practice, and science make a difference. One may reasonably take issue with Kant on this point as a matter of degree rather than an absolute distinction of sensibility and not be thought uncharitable or insane, arguing that our sense are built and operate similarly. In addition, Kant invokes the moral law as a common source of the feeling of satisfaction [*Wohlgefallen*] of a homogeneous pleasure for everyone based on reason and "our supersensible destination." However, this is enough to disentangle taste from the communicability of feeling and leave a logical space within which to insert a vicarious experience.

Second, the communicability of feeling to be found in common sense is implemented in two ways. On the one hand, it is implemented as reflective capability resulting in the

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[5] Kant continues in his revision to the way people actually use the term "common sense" and elaborates on what is really the name of a problem in the philosophical tradition, common sense as the place where all five of the standard senses are integrated - at least since Aristotle for whom common sense was neither a sixth sense (there are only five) nor reducible to one of the other five senses. Aristotle, *De Anima* 3.2.427a9f. See also D. Heller-Roazen, *The Inner touch: Archaeology of a Sensation*, New York: Zone Books, 2007: 44.

[6] ". . . was unser Gefühl an einer gegebenen Vorstellung ohne Vermittlung eines Begriffs allgemein mitteilbar macht. . ."

[7] "Wenn Empfindung, als das Reale der Wahrnehmung, auf Erkenntnis bezogen wird, so heist sie Sinnenempfindung, und das Spezifisches ihrer Qualität lässt sich as durchgängig auf gleiche Art mitteilbar vorstellen, wenn man annimmt, dass jedermann einen gleichen Sinn mit dem unsrigen habe . . . "

disinterested, (un)purposive, universal, and necessary feelings known as judgments of taste. However, there is something left over in the communicability of feeling which Kant discards as charm and emotion, but which can be used to integrate vicarious experience. On the other hand, the communicability of feeling is implemented as a capability resulting in vicarious experiences that become the basis of assertions about the mental state of other persons. In short, the *sensus communis aestheticus* provides textual warrant for the communicability of a feeling but without the addition of any specific concept. Granted that the pleasure arises from the free play of the understanding and imagination (not vice versa), to make progress in knowing others it is necessary to bring a concept back and subsume the experience under a concept—the other—not the harmonious and sensible relation of the imagination and understanding. Here the distinction *sensus communis logicus* lends support to the assertion that other minds are available as both intuition and concept, knowledge in the full sense. In particular, the *sensus communis logicus* adds back the concept of the other. Kant explicitly points out that among other functions this kind of common sense enable us "to put ourselves in thought in the place of every other" (Kant, 1790/93: 136; 158).[8] This enable us to link back to the disambiguation of the dialectic of other minds, since a logical function is invoked substituting a third-person for a first-person perspective.

## *Consequences of Bringing in the Concept of the Other*

Thus, even if a Kantian approach to other minds starts out being receptive to the other with an aesthetic-like attitude that is nonconceptual, we ultimately bring in the concept of the other in order to limit the free play of the imagination and understanding and determine the experience as a source of practical knowledge of the other. If our purpose is to know the other, then a judgment by means of a feeling, as in a judgment of taste, is inadequate, and the requirement must be brought back in to subject the intuitions to the rigor of conceptual determination and see if they survive the test. Thus, we have a form of experience intermediate between a first-person experience that is contingently experienced only by the person having it and a third person experience that is publicly available to multiple individuals. But limiting the aesthetic approach

[8] "…an der Stelle jedes anderen denken…" See also *KU* AA 05: 159f: ". . . Wenn er . . . aus einem allgemeinen Standpunkte (den er dadurch nur bestimmen kann, das er sich in den Standpunkt anderer versetz) über sein eignes Urteil reflecktiert"; and *KrV*: A 353: "Es ist offenbar: dass, wenn man sich ein denkend Wesen vorstellen will, man sich selbst an seine Stelle setzen, and also dem Objekte, welches man erwägen wollte, sein eigenes Subjekt unterschieben müsse…

by bringing in a concept raises the requirement from a reflective to a determinate judgment and the latter include both theoretic and practical knowledge.

Granted that the pleasure arises from the free play of the understanding and imagination (not vice versa), to make progress in knowing others it is necessary to bring a concept back and subsume the experience under a concept—the other—not the harmonious and sensible relation of the imagination and understanding. This is why the study of beauty and fine art can improve our interpersonal skills and openness to the experiences of others, but by itself is insufficient. We have been lacking what has been beneath our noses from the start, that is, a form of experience intermediate between a first-person experience that is contingently experienced only by the person having it and a third person experience that is publicly available to multiple individuals. But limiting the aesthetic approach by brining in a concept raises the requirement from a reflective to a determinate judgment and the latter include both theoretic and practical knowledge.

Even if we start out being receptive to the other with an aesthetic-like attitude that is nonconceptual, we ultimately bring in the concept of the other in order to limit the free play of the imagination and understanding and determine the experience as a source of practical knowledge of the other. If our purpose is to know the other, then a judgment by means of a feeling, as in a judgment of taste, is inadequate, and the requirement must be brought back in to subject the intuitions to the rigor of conceptual determination and see if they survive the test.

## *The Proof of Other Minds Gives Way to a Modest Analysis of Human Relations*

The obvious question at this point--now that we have identified both a concept ("the other"), an empirical intuition ("vicarious experience"), and an a priori intuition ("respect") corresponding to the problem of other minds—is something like a transcendental deduction required to establish the objectivity of the concept of the other? Now that we have disentangled the dialectical illusion that inevitably thrusts itself upon us as we resonate between the first and second person points of view, without incorrigibility and without mere arguments from analogy, are we not plunged back into the abyss of "other mindedness" by the requirement to establish the objectivity of the other? Just as the busting of dialectical illusion(s) about the simplicity of the soul in the Paralogism does not eliminate the need to demonstrate the objectivity of the

categories in an analytic of the understanding; and just as the dialectical illusions about the beginning and end of time and space in the physical universe is consistent with need for a priori synthetic principles of nature; does not an authentically Kantian approach to the problem of other minds necessitate a deduction of the concept of the other and indeed not as an ethical but as a cognitive rule relevant to knowledge?

Such an undertaking at this point will not be a trivial one. However, in the interest of completeness, let's outline an approach. This reasoning, which in outline is an example of what Kant calls a "transcendental argument" (Kant/Smith, 1781/87: 592, 624; A737/B705, A787/B815), provides an argument that answers a question of the form: Granted that we have certain experiences, such as a vicarious experience, what must be the constitution of our mental functions in order to account for the possibility of such experiences? At some point a functioning capacity for being receptive to the feelings of others must be active in order for the recognition, identification, and understanding of feelings in the other to be thinkable, conceivable, in any case. Let us see if we cannot avoid reinventing the wheel, which is always a formidable job, by building on the shoulders of giants who have come before. In this instance, P.F. Strawson undercuts the problem of other minds without explicitly invoking the redescriptions of the problem as one of dialectical illusion.

Strawson starts out simply enough. As individuals, persons support both physical and mental properties and it is arguably necessary to have a physical framework in order to identify and reidentify the mental properties. Strawson has argued that such a step is not merely empirical but conceptual and, at least under one plausible interpretation, transcendental. When shifted in the direction of establishing non-solipsistic consciousness, according to Strawson, "a condition of the ascription of states of consciousness to oneself is the ability to ascribe them to others" (*Individuals*, Part I: Particulars, 3. Persons, [4]). This provides the distinction other/ego at a single pass. The ego without the other makes no sense, goes beyond the bounds of sense; but so does the ego with the other. By definition, I am not going to have a quantitatively and qualitatively identical experience as the other is experiencing it. I can experience something similar and under ideal circumstances something qualitatively identical; but not his experience pure and simple without ceasing to exist as a separate individual. However since other persons are basic particulars that are a part of a conceptual scheme that has true sentences relative to a mutually translatable language and immediately present to both material and mental predicates, I

have all the warrant needed to undertake an empirical inquiry whether in this set of circumstances I really do know what the other is experiencing or whether I am being deceived.

I am individualized as a person and as a basic particular by my spatio-temporal location. There are lots of further details relating to the categorization, identification, and reidentification of persons, events, and phenomena in my environment that Strawson considers that are not relevant here. However, what has been missed from a Kantian perspective relating to the problem of other minds, which Strawson so admirably tries to finesse by means of embedding the self in the other and vice versa, is that we are still skating close to the bounds of experience without a form of receptivity corresponding to our experience of the other. Putting our skeptic hat on again, we are backed up into solipsism if our inventory of relevant experiences inclusions all the signs and symptoms and manifestations of the expression of the other's anger without getting to the anger itself. Granted that ordinary language clearly shows us the distinction between knowing the answer to the interrogative question "What is he feeling? (Answer: anger.)" and knowing that which he feels, expecting a relative clause the object of which is his feeling as he feels it, we are impelled by our desire to understand to revise the misleading distinction in the direction of formal knowledge. The whole point is that my experience of the other is not limited to the other individual's behavioral expressions nor is it available only through knowing, what is indeed the case, that without the other I would not be coherently experiencing my own experience, including these skeptical doubts about the other. What was missing was a form of receptivity adapted to experiencing the other as the other experience's himself. Until now. Granted that my experience is always mine (by definition and by experience), my experience includes a vicarious experience of the other.

This provides guidance about the significance of one of the more difficult—let's be honest and say "obscure" - remarks made by Strawson, in arguing for the ascription of psychological or mental predicates ("P-Predicates") such as emotions, sensations, etc. namely, "…[T]he behavior-criteria one goes on are not just signs of the presence of what is meant by the P-predicate, but are criteria of a logically adequate kind for the ascription of the P-predicate." However, he never says what are the "logically adequate kind" of "behavior-criteria."[9] The behavioral criteria give way to a conceptual scheme that roughly speaking puts people in the world. Instead of making an immediate move upwards towards a conceptual scheme, a move that may be useful and

[9] . P.F. Strawson*, Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (1959), London: Methuen, 1959: 112.

inevitable eventually, we first identify a vicarious experience as input to the process of further knowledge formation about the other, plucking the concept of the other from the conceptual scheme, not the experience.

What Hume called sympathy, what modern phenomenologists called "empathy" (*Einfühlung*), and the essential component for our purposes of what we called "vicarious experience," is just such a condition of possibility for describing others (and by implication ourselves) as capable of being affected by others' feelings. Vicarious experience is what makes possible being affected by the other and, in turn, affecting the other by my own expressions. This experience, in turn, is the basis on which we are subsequently justified in positing the existence of the capacity for vicarious experience. But in this vicarious experience is itself presupposed, for without vicarious experience, the communication of affect would not occur at all. Thus, the argument has the force of logic. It is concerned with what is thinkable, conceivable, without contradiction. Yet it is more than mere logic, for it concerns the realm of experience. Vicarious experience is that on the ground of which being affected by the feelings of others is constituted as a realm of accessible experiences in the first place.

> These remarks are not intended to suggest how the 'problem of other minds' could be solved, or our beliefs about others given a general philosophical 'justification'. I have already argued that such a 'solution' or 'justification' is impossible, that the demand for it cannot be coherently stated. Nor are these remarks intended as a priori genetic psychology. They are simply intended to help to make it seem intelligible to us, at this state in the history of the philosophy of the subject, that we have the conceptual scheme we have. What I am suggesting is that it is easier to understand how we can see each other, and ourselves, as person, if we think first of the fact that we act, and act on each other, and act in accordance with a common human nature (Strawson 1959: 112).

Even if vicarious feelings are not an ontological bridge between first-person and third-person perspectives, they are at least an experiential thread knitting together our shared joys and suffering. This answers the skeptic by providing reasons why we are justified in ignoring him – the communicability of affect, vicarious experience at the level of the transcendental aesthetic combined with the concept of the other (as it emerged in common sense). But like all cases of dialectical illusion, the job has to be done repeatedly since the illusion persists (and returns) in spite of its resolution. We don't really get over it, though it is put in its place and becomes an idle wheel that does not move any other part of the mechanism of interhuman relations. Thus, the proud name of proof of other minds gives way to a modest analysis of interhuman relations.