

Empathy, Sympathy, and Compassion: Navigating the Landscape of Emotional Resonance

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ABSTRACT: Positive social interactions are crucial for our well-being. According to Fredrickson, the key to these interactions is positivity resonance, a form of positive emotional resonance that requires shared positive emotions, mutual care, and psychophysical synchrony. To achieve this, we must recognise emotions and have a fundamental ability to perceive others. Arnold's research delves deeper into emotional reverberation, suggesting that emotional contagion arises merely from shared emotions. Empathy, sympathy, and compassion, instead, are all forms of emotional resonance that require a dynamic understanding of others' emotions. As humans, we can interpret both our own and others' emotional experiences, although there is some confusion between empathy and sympathy. While the two concepts may seem similar, psychologists and phenomenologists aim to clarify their essential differences. Sympathy is a positive emotion that highlights our affective consciousness and capacity for social cognition. This article argues that positive emotional resonance (Fredrickson's notion of love) is sympathy's psychophysiological scaffolding or counterpart. It also argues the ethical dimension of sympathy and compassion since we can foster them through moral decisions and habituation. Ultimately, it highlights the impact of sharing positive emotions on interpersonal interactions.

KEY WORDS: Barbara Fredrickson, compassion, emotional resonance, empathy, Magda Arnold, positive emotion, sympathy.

Introduction

In the last decades, emotional resonance has gained attention in moral psychology, neuroscience, and the philosophy of emotion. The term is relatively new, though the concepts included have a long tradition.

Empathy, sympathy, and compassion have been discussed differently by Aristotle, Hume, Smith, Scheler, and Stein, among others. These authors have highlighted their relevance to ethics.¹

Nowadays, emotional resonance is studied mainly by psychology scholars and phenomenologists. They point out that emotional resonance implies shared emotions, their embodiment, and understanding of others, in a word, intersubjectivity.

It refers to experiencing and sharing emotions in the context of established relationships, bonds, and general social interactions.

The article deals with emotional resonance based on some classical and contemporary phenomenological views and the ideas of two psychologists: Magda Arnold (1903–2002), the forerunner of appraisal emotion theory, and Barbara Fredrickson (b. 1964), a leading researcher and author of the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. First, it reviews their accounts of emotional resonance. Second, it explains the notions of empathy, sympathy, and compassion, posing their differences while pointing out some confusion about them. Third, the article stresses the ethical dimension of sympathy and compassion in understanding emotional resonance through a developmental view. Ultimately, it highlights the significance of shared positive emotions and their impact on interpersonal interactions.

1. Theories of Emotional Resonance

1.1. *Fredrickson's Positivity Resonance*

Fredrickson's research focuses on positive emotions and their broadening and building effects. She does not refer to emotional resonance in general but specifically to positive emotional resonance or what she names positivity resonance. It is one of the offshoots of Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (2013: 6). She calls positivity resonance those experiences of connection in social interactions characterised by shared positive emotions (e.g., joy, gratitude, awe), which include psychophysical synchrony and mutual care. It can occur between two or more people in face-to-face encounters (Fredrickson 2016: 852).

Fredrickson emphasises the biochemistry of this resonance. She speaks of the flow of the hormone oxytocin and the occurrence of brain

¹ I do not intend to deal with these classic views here. Only some of Scheler's views will be scarcely presented because Magda Arnold relies on his perspective. For a historical and conceptual review of sympathy and empathy, see Schliesser (2015) and Songhorian (2014).

coupling (mirror neurons responding to the actions of others: grasping, holding). She also writes of cardiac vagal tone variations favoured by sharing positive emotions (Fredrickson 2013: 41–43).

Among the novelties of her work is the consideration of love as a positive emotional resonance. Such consideration implies adopting a broader concept of love as a positive emotion. Love as an emotion experience is distinct from love relationships in that love emotion comprises any positive emotion that is felt in the context of people's connections with others. Thus, love is any positive emotion shared between two or more people. Love's other features are bibehavioural synchrony and mutual care. Nonverbal behavioural synchrony is a crucial mechanism through which self-disclosure produces an embodied sense of rapport.

Bibehavioural synchrony “refers to the mirroring across people's behaviours, bodies, and brains that each moment of shared positive emotional connection creates ... Beyond the thought-action tendencies associated with whichever particular positive emotion is at that moment shared, love motivates mutual care” (Fredrickson 2013: 41). Fredrickson calls all of these elements of love—shared positive emotions, bibehavioural synchrony, and mutual care—positivity resonance. In this theory, love is “a form of social connection” marked by “positive resonance” (2013: 43).

1.2. *Arnold's Perspective*

Arnold deals with the emotional reverberation at the psycho-affective layer. Based on Scheler's thought, Arnold refers to *emotional contagion* or *infectious emotions* when sharing emotions. She says, “we respond to others not only as of the persons they are but also as they are cheerful or sad, angry or fearful” (Arnold 1960b: 314). There is no single process explaining why we might “catch” a friend's depression, for example. It does not involve conscious choice but rather an automatic alignment of expressions and mood. Similarly, in joyful company, conversations reflect shared happiness. A newcomer will gradually observe others' perspectives and, over time, join in the amusement. As Arnold describes, emotional contagion happens as the newcomer appraises the situation similarly to others, leading to a shared emotional response. Take the case of the collective emotion that overtakes a lynch mob or the crowd at a World Cup football match.

In other words, we react before—or can be affected by—other people's emotions, even if unaware. Precisely, *emotional contagion* occurs

without being aware. Moreover, the agent takes his or her contagious experience as original to them and not as ‘caught’ by another person. It is only the feeling that is being caught. Catching an emotion is like catching a cold (Goldie 2000: 195).

However, even if we know the emotion as having been caught by another, *contagion* is insufficient to grasp the other’s emotion. This is so because the emotion can be ‘caught’ without ‘catching’ the object of the other person’s emotion. That is the case when someone starts to feel amused when hearing the giggles of two people engaged in a conversation that the person cannot overhear. The person is caught by their amusement but has no idea what their object is. *Contagion* is neither necessary nor sufficient for emotional understanding or explanation (Goldie 2000: 110).

That is why Arnold, following Scheler’s *The Nature of Sympathy* explanations, will argue that genuinely emotional understanding must be rooted in sympathy or compassion, accompanied by an empathic love.

2. Empathy, Sympathy, and Compassion

Besides emotional contagion, Arnold mentions two or three other forms of emotional resonance: empathy, sympathy, and compassion. The two latter forms include an emotional understanding of other’s emotions. In fact, as humans, we can understand our emotional experiences as emotional experiences of a particular sort (Arnold 1960b: 316–9). In this sense, we are self and other interpreting animals (Taylor 1985: 59).

Contemporarily, authors from phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions in philosophy claim that empathy, on the most basic level, should not be conceived of as a resonance phenomenon but as a type of direct perception (Zahavi 2010). In this sense, empathy is a unique type of intentional act, characterised by a direct, perception-like experience of other embodied minds as they are. Additionally, they contend that a more cognitively complex form of empathetic understanding—akin to imagination but not reducible to it—entails envisioning another person’s emotions and actions from their own perspective (Jardine & Szanto 2017: 95).

I intend not to address this discussion—as it falls beyond the scope of the present article—but to point out broadly that philosophers and psychologists are somewhat confused about the concepts of empathy and sympathy. There is little consensus on the exact definition of empathy (Cuff et al. 2016). Sometimes, both are used as synonyms. However, there are essential differences between these two terms.

Coined by Titchener (1909),² empathy (*Einfühlung*) has been defined in contemporary psychology as an emotional response that stems from another person's emotional state or condition and is congruent with that person's emotional state or condition. Defined so broadly, empathy is not an emotion but an ability or tendency to feel whatever another person feels, including happiness, anger, or boredom (Haidt 2003: 862).

In other words, Malo—paraphrasing Stein (1989: 3, 11)—notes that empathy “is the capacity to recognise someone else's sensations, emotions, and actions as humans” though we can also empathise with animal sensations and emotions. “This capacity is immediately rooted in the experience of our lived body” (Malo 2013: 1214).

Empathy differs from emotional infection because the latter is a mere sharing of emotions, being unaware of that, without special concentration on another person. Empathy, however, implies sharing another's experience and feelings even if we do not want to feel the emotion the situation arouses in us (Arnold 1960: 316). We then ‘reproduce’ these thoughts or feelings indirectly (vicariously) without being fully aware of the function of intellectual or emotional reproduction. As a result, they seem to arise as our own and as someone else's (Scheler 2017: 245).

As Scheler explains, emotional infection is a contagion, like the cheerful atmosphere of a party, which can infect the newcomer. The newcomer gradually comes to share the emotional object and is responsive to others' emotional expressions. The emotion caused by infection reproduces itself again through expression and imitation (Scheler, 2017: 15).³

Following Scheler, Arnold admits that emotional infection and empathy are cases of emotional identification. Empathy means to understand—and imagine—another's emotion, experience it, and thus, ‘live the situation’ spontaneously instead of with the other. Another way

² In several publications from the early 20th century, Lipps argued that the concept of *Einfühlung* (initially developed within aesthetics) was significant for understanding social cognition. It was this idea that the American psychologist Edward B. Titchener later translated as “empathy” in his 1909 *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of Thought-Processes* (Zahavi 2023: 491).

³ The Schelerian notion of sympathy (*Sympathie*) refers to a person's ability to ‘feeling-with’ another vital subject (i.e., the fellow feeling) in such a way that the perception of emotions as he feels them causes a certain resonance, generating a shared feeling. Sympathy is not the mere awareness of another individual; it is not empathy but its consequence (Malo, 2012: 332). Sympathy can go as far as the border of that inner realm but never beyond. For Scheler, the knowledge conveyed by sympathy is metaphysical in that it grasps that the other possesses the same hidden inner life that one also possesses (Dillard-Wright 2007: 3). According to Scheler, empathy (*Einfühlung*, or better *Nachfühlen*) represents a fundamental way of understanding others. It is nothing more than the perception of the other's feeling as a feeling recognised as foreign because it is not one's own (Scheler 2017: 260; Zahavi 2023: 493–5).

of referring to empathy is as an ‘imaginative participation’ in which we experience the same emotion. Furthermore, it is not a matter of imitation but a spontaneous experience, even in imagination. This form of ‘living in the imagination’ requires only concentration on the situation as if it were confronting us. In such a way, the emotions aroused are genuine, like those aroused in a dream. Nevertheless, they do not outlast the situation that gives rise to them. Think, for instance, when we watch a movie, and the drama touches us (Arnold 1960: 316).

Arnold’s explanation of empathy as imaginative participation in others’ feelings coincides with Goldie’s account. Interestingly, he adds that a person imagines the ‘narrative’ of another person while experiencing empathy. There are some necessary conditions for empathy: perception of that person as ‘another’, that is, another person I know and with a grasp of her narrative. To empathise with someone is to imagine another person’s thoughts, feelings, and emotions while experiencing them. To grasp the other’s narrative or personal story implies also bearing in mind her characterisation (character traits, emotional dispositions, and other personality aspects). For example, this may entail understanding someone’s phobia of dogs and other general facts about this person—being short, being a lawyer—as parts of her narrative (Goldie 2000: 195).

Arnold poses conversely that sympathy is not an imaginative participation because the emotion is not aroused when the others feel it. Sympathy presupposes understanding the other’s situation and responding to their feelings. One has sympathy for another when there is a fundamental agreement between the persons concerned that facilitates having a similar estimate of a situation and emotion (Arnold 1960b: 317). Thus, when we say, for instance, that we have sympathy for someone or a group, we mean that we are like-minded and appraise things as they do. Ultimately, sympathy is a fellow feeling that unites us with other people. Therefore, sympathy always includes positive feelings toward another person. That is why Arnold sorts it among positive emotions.

As Goldie explains, sympathy, in contrast to empathy, is regarded as an emotion. It includes thoughts and emotions directed at the struggles of another individual, who becomes the focus of one’s emotional response. Sympathy also motivates people to help alleviate those struggles by recognizing and responding to them. It manifests through distinct facial expressions and expressive actions (2000: 213). He further explains that sympathy, like many other emotions, is associated with a specific character trait—a predisposition to feel sympathy—which is a distinct virtue, different from the disposition of being just (Goldie 2000: 218).

Sympathy entails the capacity to ‘feel with the other’ to understand their pain or joy without being affected by this understanding. We are not related to others based on internal representations of an external world. Instead, we enact a human world inseparable from our own lived body.

Malo recalls that Scheler modifies Smith’s thesis, such that sympathy is neither a “shared feeling” nor a feeling that has another’s action or emotion as an object; instead, it is a “feeling-with” (2013: 1215). In this respect, sympathy is the oldest of the old academy’s moral emotions since it was considered the foundation of morality by Adam Smith (1759/1956), David Hume (1739/1969), and even Jean Piaget (1932/1965).⁴ All these authors saw it as a basic fact about human nature that people feel bad when others suffer, and these feelings sometimes move them to help (Haidt 2003: 861).

Nonetheless, Arnold argues that ideally, sympathy may have to include empathy if we do not want to invoke a shallow Pollyanna attitude, meaning unrealistic, like the titular character of Eleanor Porter’s children’s book *Pollyanna*: a cheerful and optimistic girl who always looks on the bright side (Matlin 2017: 315).

To comfort another person effectively, we must first feel with the other before we can arouse a desire to fight their problem. Arnold briefly mentions pity or compassion as the restricted sense of sympathy, as it is aroused by something harmful happening to another person (Arnold 1960b: 316–8). She indicates that compassion used to be a broad term and was identified with sympathy. The root of both words is *pathos*. How-

⁴ In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), Hume argues that moral approval and disapproval stem from sympathy, not as a feeling but as a psychological mechanism allowing one to adopt others’ emotions through communication. Akin to empathy, sympathy shapes our moral judgments by emotionally connecting us to others’ experiences, influencing our sense of right and wrong.

Adam Smith’s concept of sympathy in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) involves understanding and sharing others’ emotions by imagining oneself in their situation. This imaginative process helps individuals make moral judgments by aligning their emotions with those of others and fosters social cohesion by promoting empathy and ethical behavior.

From a developmental perspective, Jean Piaget’s concept of sympathy is linked to cognitive development (*The Moral Judgment of the Child*, 1932), where children shift from egocentric thinking to understanding others’ perspectives. Initially focused on self-interest and authority-imposed rules, children later develop empathy through cooperative interactions. This progression is essential for moral development, recognizing fairness and reciprocity.

Discussion of these classic perspectives lies beyond the scope of this article; however, it is necessary to note that the later introduction of the term “empathy” into English compared to “sympathy” can aid in interpreting Hume’s or Smith’s work. As Agosta suggests, their lack of distinction between these concepts may simply reflect the absence of two distinct terms at the time (Agosta 2011).

ever, compassion is often reduced to mere pity, a view that contradicts Aristotle's original concept. Aristotle defined compassion as the pain felt at another's undeserved misfortune, distinguishing it from pity, which can arise even in response to deserved misfortunes (*Rhet.* 1386b26–29). This nuanced understanding of compassion has evolved significantly from Aristotle's time to the present, a progression thoroughly examined by Kristjánsson (2017: 70) in the contemporary philosophical debate.

Take the case of our friend diagnosed with a severe illness. We feel her fear with her. Her fear and pain affect us as good friends, so we want to help and support her. In this case of sympathy—or, more appropriately, compassion—we feel empathy at least briefly to give her an opportunity for empathic courage.

Like Arnold, other psychologists connect sympathy with compassion, which Lazarus (1991) describes as being moved by another person's suffering. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines compassion as a deep feeling for and understanding of misery or suffering and the concomitant desire promoting its alleviation. There is agreement that compassion is elicited by the perception of suffering or sorrow in another person, making us want to help, comfort, or otherwise alleviate the suffering of the other (Haidt 2003: 862).

As we may notice, sympathy—and empathy—are commonly referred to as others' difficulties or negative experiences. However, our interactions do not always imply comforting people. What about feeling with and sharing in others' experiences of joy, awe, or pride of achievement?

Honestly, we can be joyful with others' joy or achievement, and at the same time, we are better disposed to avoid the vice of envy. Indeed, Pieper is right when saying:

If we consider our own experience with people, we will realise that shared joy is a more reliable sign of real love than shared grief or compassion; it is also far rarer... A good many foreign elements having nothing to do with love may be involved in compassion (i.e., cynical attitude regarding others' misfortunes)—which, therefore, is not so “pure” a case as shared joy. (Pieper 1972: 141)

One might argue that cultural factors should be considered when explaining why certain emotions—particularly positive ones—are shared or withheld and how they are expressed.⁵ For example, while English characters in the 16th and 17th centuries were passionate, they later shifted toward emotional restraint, influenced by Scottish moral senti-

⁵ Arnold does not deal explicitly with cultural factors regarding emotions. Fredrickson refers partially to cultural variations. See Valenzuela 2024: 138ff, 151, 170.

ment, particularly in the social expression of feelings (Polo 2015: 13).⁶ However, the ethical dimension transcends—or should transcend—cultural circumstances.

3. Understanding Emotional Resonance

At this point, we may conclude that, along with our lives, we develop a grasp of another person's emotional responses. We can consider two issues related to this. First, ethical motivation is involved when one understands another person's emotions, particularly suffering or distress. Second, there is the real possibility of understanding other persons' emotions, which phenomenologists study.

Regarding the first issue, understanding another person's suffering or distress, whether or not through an imaginative process, is insufficient for ethical motivation: an ethical outlook towards the world, of which sympathy is one sort, is also necessary. Empathy and similar abilities do not pave a high road to ethics (Goldie 2000: 213).

Regarding the second issue, Malo points out that Scheler considers possibly understanding others intellectually and affectively. However, he doubts we can do it through empathy—perhaps in polemical disagreement with Stein—because if we put ourselves in other people's shoes, it is always from our own perspective and not from the other (Malo 2021).

The matter is that phenomenologists consider experience (*Erlebnis*) as a purely individual starting point. Then, we will never be able to experience what another person feels. Scheler proposes a complicated identification process from another individualisation, from "us." Then we discover the other's (individual) "self": "you." While going against Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Scheler criticises the confusion between compassion and contagion, the fusion of the self in a universal mesh of suffering that excludes genuine compassion (Scheler 2017: 55).

He also criticises the ordinary meaning of compassion, which brings it closer to empathy (*Einfühlung*) and implies putting oneself in the place of the other. If we put ourselves in the shoes of the other, we will only have compassion for ourselves since, by doing so, we would understand ourselves and not the other:

The theory of empathy offers no grounds for assuming the existence of other selves, let alone other individuals. For it can only serve to confirm the belief that

⁶ See also Chopik et al.'s (2017) cross-cultural study that highlights how empathy varies between individualistic and collectivist cultures, offering insights into the cultural influences on emotional resonance.

my self is present “all over again” and never that this self is other and different from my own. (Scheler 2017: 242)

Compassion arises from the relation between “us”: between the other person and me. Nevertheless, simple contagion is not compassion but only a *conditio sine qua non*. Compassion requires an active disposition to help or at least feel the desire to alleviate the other person’s suffering.

The actual “fellow feeling” reveals itself in that it includes the existence and character of the other person as an individual, as part of the object of commiseration and rejoicing (Scheler 2017: 39).

From a developmental perspective, we do not initially have rational knowledge of things. However, others provide for us with their rationality. For example, babies feel pain and do not know how to alleviate it. Nevertheless, the other—the mother—with her rationality can interpret it and feel sorry for her baby, taking action to comfort her. Then, the first experience of compassion is what others have with us. In that way, we gradually incorporate it (Malo 2021).⁷

The whole question is to understand *Erlebnis* as the first experience of consciousness that already includes the *Erlebnis* of others (i.e., “alterity”) with all its rationality, interpretation, evaluation, and feelings. It is, therefore, not, as Scheler argues, the result of individualisation. For this reason, experiencing compassion for others at an early stage helps us learn to develop it later.

Therefore, Malo proposes not to start from a whole ready-developed “self” but from a self shaped by its concern for others. We are fundamentally affective conscious beings. If not, we cannot understand why “otherness” is crucial for forming ourselves as people. Our identity as persons of affective consciousness puts us in contact with reality: ourselves and the world. Let us add to Scheler’s intuitions a relational conception, under which compassion is always a dynamic relationship between you and me (Malo 2021). So, when you remain at the level of contagion or simple affective consciousness, you can lose the initial compassion. If you feel it without acting, compassion will weaken, ending in indifference. The more compassion we feel without acting, the more we get used to the evil and suffering of the other, and the less we react (Garcia 2022).

Here, the ethical dimension appears twofold: in the very decision to act to alleviate suffering or understand their joy and the degree of

⁷ From a psychological perspective, see Malti & Krettenauer’s (2013) meta-analysis that explores the link between sympathy, emotion regulation, and social development in children.

profundity of love that inspires the act of sympathy or compassion. True, we can feel sympathy without love, but it also reveals its basis in love: “Even the stirrings of sympathy are based upon love ... But if it is to amount to more than mere understanding or vicarious emotion, the act of fellow-feeling must be rooted in an enveloping act of love” (Scheler 2017: 142).⁸

According to Fredrickson, love or positivity resonance can arise when having compassion for one’s neighbour. This occurs when others are suffering, and predominant emotions are negative. However, when another person sees our suffering, there is a thread of positivity because we feel that somebody understands what is happening to us, and we feel ‘seen’ (Fredrickson 2019). Similarly, if we can see (realise) somebody else’s suffering, it feels good; in a sense, we can offer something. Then, even though negative emotions are the most predominant in feeling compassion, there is a shred of positivity. According to Fredrickson, this is called positivity resonance.

Phenomenologically speaking, positivity resonance occurs when we say: ‘I connect with this person’; ‘I feel him (her)’. It implies more than a mere intellectual ‘I understand him (her)’. It is a kind of emotional reverberation or echo at the different layers of the self: spiritual, psycho-affective, physical, and biochemical, along with their relative manifestations. Due to our embodied inter-subjectivity, we resonate with others in bond and social relationships, that is, with our loved ones (family, friends) and even with strangers in occasional exchanges. It requires the capacity of social cognition, emotional recognition, and yet, more basically, the perception of the other (Valenzuela 2024: 239).

During close personal hardships such as her husband’s health complications after surgery, Fredrickson relates that others’ positivity through compassion refuelled her during that time to help better her husband avert his downward spiral of poor health and hopelessness.

My neighbours and friends opened their hearts and shared the gifts of their compassion and time with me. Their words and deeds touched and opened my heart and unleashed more positivity within me just when I needed it most. With their love and generosity permeating me, I was able to avert the downward tug of negativity that recurred each evening. It gave me fuel to bring love and generosity to my husband’s hospital room each morning, to keep him buoyed up and afloat. (Fredrickson 2009: 117)

⁸ In contemporary terms, see Batson’s (2011) examination of how sympathy, distinct from empathy, directly influences altruistic actions by fostering genuine concern for others.

Experiencing others' compassion resulted in trusting more in others' help and reinforcing relationships.

I learned to truly receive those kind actions and offers of help. Moved in a heartfelt way, I was able to be more fully open. Sure, I had known for years and from volumes of data that positivity opens us. But, my experiences during this time were neither subtle nor abstract. I could feel the hinges of my heart and mind give. I became so open that, for the first time, I fully trusted that people wanted to help. I even let others know what they could do that would be the most helpful. I needed milk, bread, and lunch box items and felt free to ask. (Fredrickson 2009: 116)

The comprehensive fusion of negativity and positivity (negative and positive emotions) allowed her to receive and enact compassion.

Love or positivity resonance makes people more open to others. According to Fredrickson, when people feel good—influenced by positive emotions—their sense of self expands to include others. On the contrary, when someone is feeling bad, experiencing any negative emotion (i.e., anger, anxiety, sadness), or nothing special, the person is more self-focused.

The reason is that when people feel positive emotions, over time, these positive emotions become associated with greater feelings of self–other overlap and oneness, and this broadened sense of self may predict a more complex understanding of others (Waugh and Fredrickson 2006: 93).⁹

Fredrickson stresses the importance of finding ways that help to build up the natural tendency to be more 'other-focused' rather than 'self-focused.' It builds a habit to transform oneself into a more benevolent person.

Final Remarks

Throughout this discussion, we have explored Fredrickson's concept of positivity resonance, delved into the notions of empathy, sympathy, and compassion as put forth by Arnold and drawn insights from classical and contemporary philosophy scholars. We have uncovered essential distinctions among these emotions and capacities that shed light on their significance.

⁹ A recent comprehensive review (Vieten et al. 2024) provides insights into validated empathy and compassion measures, offering tools for various contexts, including healthcare.

Empathy, as learned, is not an emotion itself but rather a capacity for feeling that can be developed and strengthened. On the other hand, sympathy and compassion are emotions often conflated. However, we have clarified that sympathy extends beyond negative situations and can be viewed as a positive emotion. In this light, we can understand sympathy as the emotional underpinning of positivity resonance or love, as Fredrickson named it. Inversely, positivity resonance is the psychophysiological scaffolding of sympathy. Sympathy, in this sense, plays a pivotal role in fostering interpersonal connections on multiple levels: social, biological, affective, and spiritual.

Traditionally, sympathy has been associated with empathising during challenging or distressing times. However, it is worth considering whether sympathy can also be harnessed to share in the joys, awe, and pride of others. In doing so, we enhance our capacity for positive empathy and reduce the risk of falling into the trap of envy, conducting to hate.

At this point, we highlight the ethical salience of feeling good about others' good as something that can be educated.

As Pieper pointed out, shared joy and achievement may serve as more genuine love indicators than shared grief or compassion. This understanding suggests that positive emotions are unique in our interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, we must question whether we naturally share negative emotions more readily than positive ones. Is there an inherent imbalance in our emotional exchanges with others? Research indicates that positive empathy, which we might equate with sympathy, correlates with increased prosocial behaviour, strengthened social bonds, and improved well-being, as demonstrated by studies such as Morelli et al. (2015; 2012).

In conclusion, sharing positive emotions is significant for two reasons. First, it profoundly impacts our interpersonal interactions, fostering connections that contribute to our emotional and spiritual well-being. Second, it highlights the ethical dimension of sympathy and compassion, suggesting we can actively nurture these emotions through moral decisions and habitual practice. This benefits us individually and enriches the tapestry of human relationships.

In this context, we can argue for the substantial importance of sharing positive emotions as a catalyst for sympathy and compassion, ultimately enhancing the quality of our lives and interactions with others.

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