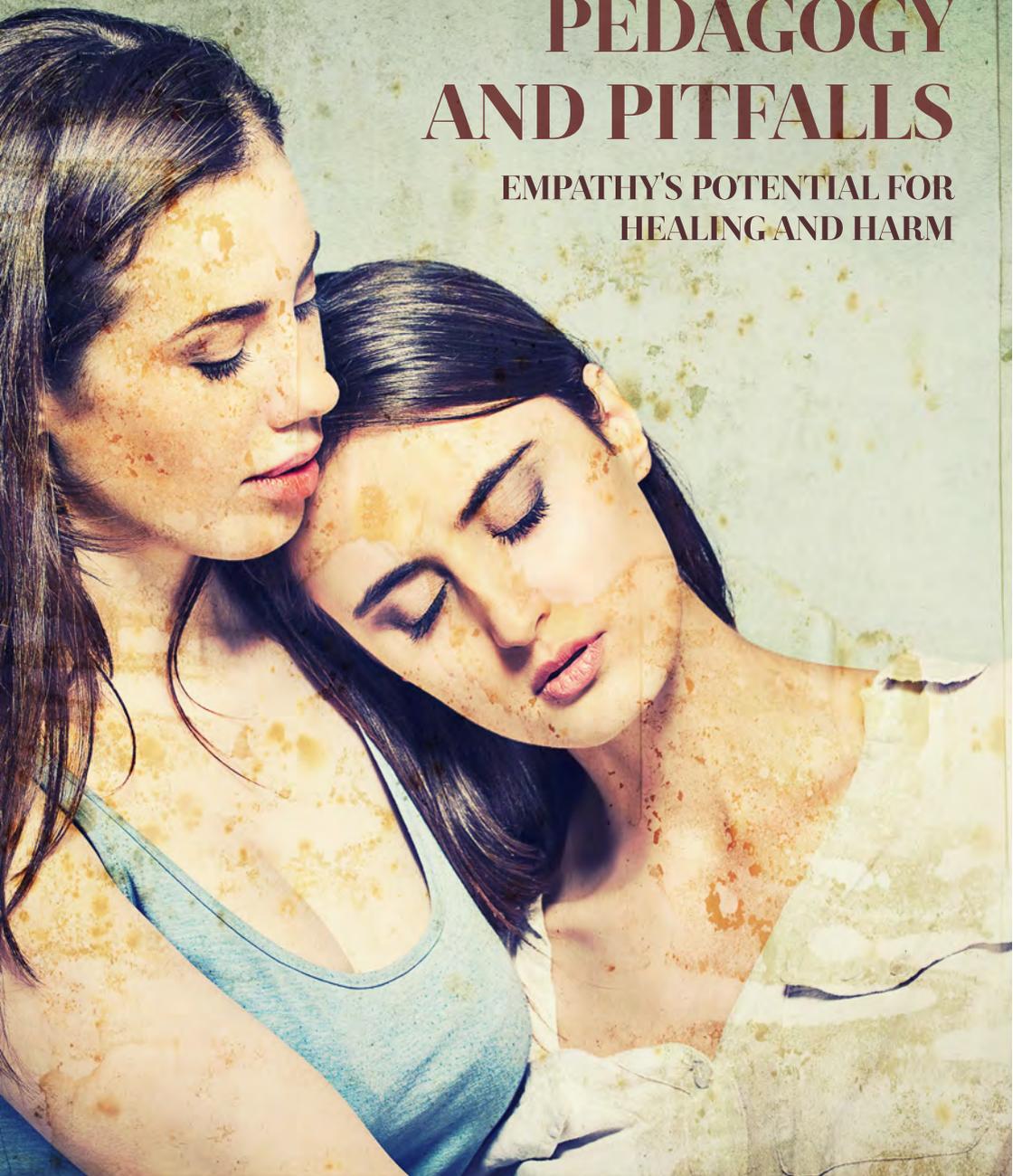


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# PROMISES, PEDAGOGY AND PITFALLS

EMPATHY'S POTENTIAL FOR  
HEALING AND HARM



Edited by: Quanta Gauld, Pam Morrison and Veronica Wain

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# The Seven Types Of Empathy: Illusion, Reality and Methodical Empathy 21<sup>st</sup> Century Report on the Progress of Empathy

*Yehuda Tagar*

## **Abstract**

Empathy is the capacity to perceive other people's internal reality from their own point of view.<sup>1</sup> For this to occur, a capacity for self-observation is required. This paper will embrace the notion that there is no unconscious empathy. It is a conscious initiative. Empathy is young. Sympathy and antipathy are at least 3,000 years old. The term, empathy is only 64 years old, as is the phenomenon it came to designate. These days we are not very empathetic, and it would seem even less so prior to the 1950s - at least in Europe. The term, empathy came into being in 1909 and gained currency in 1951 at the dawn of Humanistic Psychology. The investigation and interrogation of the term sits at the cutting edge of conscious, human evolution. However, 64 years is a relatively long time in this frenetic age, and it is my contention that there are seven types of empathy. Three types may be designated as delusional: *Projective Empathy*, *Intellectual Empathy* and *Manipulative Empathy*. Three may be deemed as real: *Perceptive Empathy*, *Conceptive Empathy* and *Enabling Empathy*, and one is the turning point between the two: *Methodical Empathy* based on self-perception, or self-empathy as a prerequisite. This article outlines these seven kinds of empathy in the context of this emerging field of inquiry. This conception of empathy is based on 25 years of clinical and educational experience in a number of countries using Psychophonetics,<sup>2</sup> a form of Anthroposophical Psychotherapy based on Rudolf Steiner's Psychosophy.<sup>3</sup> The major implication of conceiving empathy as a new reality *and* a new word is that it can be taught.

**Key Words:** Empathy, methodical empathy, psychotherapy, training, anthroposophical psychotherapy, personal development, humanistic psychology, transpersonal, phenomenology, psychophonetics, Rudolf Steiner, psychosophy.

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## **1. The Seven Types of Empathy: Illusion, Reality and Methodical Empathy**

Empathy is a new word for a new phenomenon in human evolution. Coined for the first time by Tichner in 1909<sup>4</sup> as a translation for the new German word *Einführung*,<sup>5</sup> by Vischner. Made public for the first time by Rogers in 1951,<sup>6</sup> it became a name for a specific social set of standards in the 1960s and became a universal name for a universal set of expectations, practically overnight. The term has been incorporated into theory across diverse fields including child development, neurophysiology and mental health. Most people assume that it was always 'there', like sympathy and antipathy – but it was not. Neither the word nor

the phenomenon of empathy were articulated before the Second World War. For those who are able to distinguish empathy from sympathy, it would seem that empathy requires conscious effort. For anyone consciously attempting to bring about human understanding to overcome conflict, it is clear how hard it is to move from commitment to one's own point of view to a perception of another's. We live in the very early days of a future culture of empathy. It is still a young and emerging field of enquiry.

Yet it can be taught and it can evolve as a conscious new organ of perception, step by step, by those of good will, if a method of teaching can be formulated. I offer the possibility of Methodical Empathy for that purpose.

As a trainer working at the cutting edge of this growing field it is my responsibility to observe and document its unfolding reality for me and for others.

My latest realisation of the deeper meaning of empathy dawned on me as I reflected upon a description of a friend sharing her experience of an intimate meeting with her friend, through his complete welcoming of her whole being' which enabled her to be more present in the world. She felt she was actually being born through this meeting. I found myself naming a dimension of empathy that I have experienced many times as a practitioner, as well as a parent, a colleague and a friend: being, by my presence, my words and my actions, the *Enabler* of the coming-into-being of another human being. We can empathise with the higher potential of one another and *give birth* to each other's next steps towards developing empathic awareness. One human being can become the gateway and the 'welcoming committee' for another human being's entry into a greater reality.

As a practitioner of human development and healing, one can become a member of a team that contributes to the well-being of the person one cares for. This is an example of *Enabling Empathy*. This phase of development has to be preceded by *perceiving* the person as she/he is in their present experience and by *conceiving* with that the person, a wish for the next step in their development. This process is, metaphorically, the equivalent of the process of facilitating a normal, healthy, natural birth. But nature did not give us a ready-made empathic process. This needs to be constructed consciously.

In this paper I will discuss the seven types of empathy. These consist of: *three illusory ones: Projective Empathy, Reflective Empathy and Manipulative Empathy; three real ones: Perceptive Empathy, Conceptive Empathy and Enabling Empathy, and one that is the turning point between the two: Methodical Empathy* based on Self Perception, or Self-Empathy as a pre-requisite.

1. Projective Empathy: a personal naive illusion.
2. Reflective Empathy: a professional naive illusion
3. Manipulative Empathy: a professional exploitative illusion

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4. Self-Empathy: a turning point into reality. Empathy with one's own experience. On a deeper level Self Empathy becomes an expression of one's own deeper potential
  5. Perceptive Empathy: a reality. Perceiving the person from their own point of view
  6. Conceptive Empathy: a deep reality. Perceiving a person from the point of view of their inherent potential
  7. Enabling Empathy: Perceiving the person from the point of view of the conditions required for the next step in their development

## 2. Projective Empathy: A Personal Naïve Illusion of the Reality of Others

We can also call this 'Naïve Realism Empathy'. This, unfortunately, informs most normal human communications, and a lot of it is going on in the name of love, care, passion, compassion, sympathy, commitment, being helpful and, ignorantly, it is often considered to be empathy. In the projective position we believe that we observe the person in front of us when really all we do is project our own unconscious reality at them. I am stationed inside my own subjective reality with all its unconscious and semi-conscious complexities, while looking at another human being through that personal reality, like through coloured sun glasses which I do not know I am wearing, as if they were an extension of my field of vision, completely from my own point of view. I am allowing my perception of the other to be coloured by anything they remind me of, any association they coincidentally bring up in me, with all the emotions and reaction attached to these associations: past hurts, desire, frustration, attraction, repulsion, rejection, jealousy, sympathy, antipathy, fear, hope and a whole range of personal needs unaccounted for.

In this position, especially with regard to people who are close to us and matter a great deal to us, we tend to hear what we *want* to hear and what we assume that we are hearing and disregard what we *fear* to hear. To hear what is *actually* being said and meant, is a rarity.

The only way to progress from 'Projective Empathy' is by 'Self Empathy' towards one's own reality: only in truly perceiving one's own projected reality, will the projection stop. It will be owned and contained by oneself. Only then can the 'Perceptive Empathy' of the other person begin.

## 3. Reflective Empathy: A Professional Illusion of the Capacity of Intellect to Perceive the Reality of Others

*Reflective Empathy* could also be termed: 'Empathy from the outside',<sup>7</sup> which means that it is not empathy at all. Looking objectively at a subject is like speaking Swahili to speakers of Mandarin. An observation of a subject – a human being – as

if he/she were an object, misses the major point in the observed reality ‘Reflective Empathy’ is an observation of subjects as if they were objects. It is designed for physical navigation and survival in the outer world and for natural sciences, through the established sense organs. The moment we begin dealing with psychosomatic conditions, objective-reflective empathy may distort both the reality of one’s own body and the perception of the other person. It is not the relevant mode of observation for the inner, psychological and cognitive nature of human beings. It can appear to be professional and scientific, rich in concepts and sophisticated jargon, but it is an illusion as it is not a perception of who the person really is from their own point of view. It does not include the individual formation of meaning from the inside but rather constructs the meaning of experience from the outside. It is bound to be a distortion of the actual reality.

#### **4. Manipulative Empathy: An Intentional Exploitation of Partial Perceptive Empathy for an Agenda External to the Other**

*Manipulative Empathy* is a utilitarian form of empathy, applied not for the interest of the other from their point of view, but to the service of one’s own agenda, using as much empathy as needed to manipulate the other to act according to that interest. It is the capacity to hook (or hack) into the inner system of the other deeply enough to be able to use it for one’s own purposes, but not enough to perceive the other from their own point of view. It is prevalent in the advertising industry, marketing, politics, family dynamics, controlling education, business relationships, mind control, mass media, and in espionage on any level. It is the ability to understand people’s unconscious dynamics in order to manipulate their thinking, feeling and motivation for action. It is an illusion as it reduces the whole human being to an object that is useful for the manipulator, which is a distortion of the being’s full personhood. A person’s inner reality, heart and striving spirit and disregarded in these transactions.

#### **5. Self-Empathy: A Turning Point into the Reality of Inner Life. Perceptive Empathy with One’s Own Reality as Preparation for Perceptive Empathy with Others**

*Self-Empathy* is the process of observing one’s own experience and reality with perspective. This brings forth the question: who am I outside of my experience and outside my momentary reality, to be able to observe both with perspective? Where do I stand in myself for that purpose and with that capacity for self-observation? This act requires a conscious method – one which we call *Methodical Empathy*.

‘Self-Empathy’ is a point of departure from the Two-Fold approach to human beings into the Three-Fold approach. If the human being comprises only a body and a soul (psyche) – then self-empathy would not be possible. Experience cannot observe itself, the intellect cannot see the intellect, emotions cannot see themselves nor can desires and hurts see themselves. If I have no other place to stand inside

me, which is potentially independent of my experience, then I cannot observe my experience, for any kind of observation requires perspective. But if, on the other hand, my approach to the human being is a three-fold one, namely: body, soul and individual spirit, designated as 'I',<sup>7</sup> then there is a place for me to stand from which to observe my own subjective experience objectively. 'I' can observe my own experience because 'I' am not my experience. I have experience and can choose to identify with it or not. 'I' can choose to observe my experience. It is my contention that everyone has the potential to create their own self-empathy.

It is in the very act of self-observation that a new step in the development of the new organ of *Perceptive Empathy* is potentially born. And the same organs of perception with which I can see, hear and know myself – are the organs of perception with which I can see, hear and know another human being from his or her point of view. It takes one to know one.

'Self Empathy' is regarded in the educational process of Methodical Empathy as the developmental process of creating the three new organs of perception which, combined, are the three fundamental competencies of Methodical Empathy: Imaginative Perception – see me; Inspirative Perception – hear me; Intuitive Perception - know me.<sup>8</sup>

## **6. Perceptive Empathy: Perceiving the Reality of Others from Their Own Point of View**

We are now at the stage where real empathy with another human being may begin. The bridging of the gap between observing a human being from outside to observing a human being from their own point of view – can now start to take place. Reality starts to change for both sides. New reality is being constructed for both sides of empathic perspective. On that basis a construction of a new common picture between the two people can be created. The provision of such a new common space enables people to connect to themselves in a completely new way.

Into that new common picture, a new self-knowledge can safely enter. Fear exists on the threshold of any step in self-knowledge. The very presence of another human being who observes me from my own point of view without judgment can help to overcome that fear, making new steps in self-knowledge possible. Based on new self-knowledge, new will becomes available for action and for change. *Perceptive Empathy* creates a moment of community around the present conditions. In that community, however momentary, a new level of safety becomes possible. Into that new safety a new dimension of oneself can enter, which was but a potential before.

'Perceptive Empathy' is a new organ of perception created anew for every new meeting. That organ of perception can only evolve through a new process of 'Self Empathy' at every step.

The constant transition of 'Self-Empathy' into 'Perceptive Empathy' of others is the essence of 'Methodical Empathy'.

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### **7. Conceptive Empathy: Empathy with the Unborn Potential of another Human Being. Perceiving the Potential of Others Before it is Being Realised. Supporting its Realisation**

Empathy can do more than perceiving the present state of human experience; it can reach into the person's higher potential which is yet unborn, enabling a reality just as a midwife enables the birthing process. When people feel truly seen by another human being, they become warmer and more present to themselves. They can aspire to that which has never been experienced before – higher, stronger, deeper dimensions of their humanity. This process can be encouraged and accelerated with a form of empathy that can enable a higher conception of one's self.

On the basis of 'Self-Empathy' and the achievement of 'Perceptive Empathy', in which the person felt seen, heard and known to another human being, the courage and creativity to conceive oneself on another level becomes possible, free of present self-image, history and habits, and moving into that dimension of oneself that has never been experienced before. That is *Conceptive Empathy*.

'Conceptive Empathy' carries the danger of the practitioner becoming too close to the client, over-guiding, over-advising, pre-empting what the next step of the client's potential is supposed to be. With the best intention and the highest ethical standards of freedom in the world, this danger needs to be considered.

Therefore, in the basic procedure of Psychophonetics / Methodical Empathy session there is a requirement for the client to formulate their own, authentic self-articulated wish as the overall direction and purpose of the session.<sup>9</sup> On the basis of the freely formulated wish, 'Conceptive Empathy' is possible.

### **8. Enabling Empathy: Perceiving and Providing the Conditions Required for the Manifestation of Others' Development**

*Enabling Empathy* is the conscious creation of the conditions required for a living being to progress to the next stage of its development. Nature provides for all of its creatures. Parents endeavour to provide these conditions for their children, mostly intuitively, and educators are supposed to provide for their students. So what is new about enabling empathy? What is new about it is that it is actually empathetic, namely: provided from the point of view of the receiver of empathy, not from the point of view of the giver.

Nature enables the physical development of its creatures in an established, repetitive manner. Parents and educators have traditionally acted upon their traditions, concepts, assumptions and theories regarding the best conditions for children to grow into the place they imagine for the child and the roles for them to play in later life. But that process comes from the outside; it is not yet empathetic. To be empathetic, the enabling must come from direct perception of the unique nature, impulse, inner being and authentic will of the child and the teenager, rather than moulding them into some ready-made picture created from outside. With

regard to adult education, training, coaching and therapy, un-empathetic treatment is progressively suppressive for the unique individual nature of the receiver of the care. Just as the placenta nurtures the embryo, and the earth, sun, air, water and light enable the blossoming of a plant, a good home must provide for its dwellers – this has to become the conscious art of ‘Enabling Empathy’. It provides the relevant human attributes, attitudes, quality of space, of time, of attention that are required for human beings to take the next step in their development, from their own intrinsic nature, soul and spirit. To be able to provide this – the ‘Enabling Empathy’ stage involves perceiving the inner nature, soul and spirit of the receiver. That capacity of perception can only evolve consciously.

Empathy is still young. We are all beginners in this evolutionary process. The need for empathy is everywhere and involves everyone, however the ability to provide it is in chronic short supply in all walks of life: personal relationships, families, work relations, national affairs, international relationships and conflict. The realisation that empathy is in its early phase of development is essential for embarking upon its conscious cultivation. If indeed it is new as asserted in this paper, then we are all beginners and have much to learn. That is the core constructive message of *Methodical Empathy*.

There is no unconscious empathy. It can evolve only by conscious effort and free initiative, beginning with self-awareness.

I hope that this article is a contribution towards the creation of a practical language, a new discourse and inspires the further development of empathy as a new field of inquiry.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Yehuda Tagar, ‘Metodická Empatia – Cesta Vedomej Evolúcie. 1,’ trans. Silvia Galatova. *Vitalia*, May 2014, 54. (Methodological Empathy - Path of Conscious Evolution. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Robin Steele, *Psychophonetics, Holistic Counselling and Psychotherapy. Stories and Insights from Practice*, ed. Robin Steele (Great Barrington, M Australia: Lindisfarne Books, 2011), 3-20.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *A Psychology of Body, Soul, Spirit*, trans. Marjorie Spock (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1999, 1910), 76 -153.

<sup>4</sup> Edward B. Titchener, *Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1909), viewed 14 December 2014.

[https://archive.org/stream/cu31924024573176/cu31924024573176\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/cu31924024573176/cu31924024573176_djvu.txt).

<sup>5</sup> Robert Vischer, ‘On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics,’ *Empathy, Form, and Space. Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893*, trans. and eds. Harry F. Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomu (Santa Monica, CA: University of Chicago Press), 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Rogers, *Client Centred Therapy: its Current Practice, Implications and Theory* (London, Constable 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Steiner, *A Psychology of Body, Soul, Spirit*.

<sup>8</sup> Yehuda Tagar, Preface to *Psychophonetics, Holistic Counselling and Psychotherapy. Stories and Insights from Practice.* by Robin Steele (Great Barrington, M. Australia: Lindisfarne Books, 2011), ix-xii.

<sup>9</sup> Yehuda Tagar, 'Empatia a Sebariadenie Pomocou Psychofonetik', ('Empathy and Self-Management by Psychophonetics'), trans. Silvia Galatova, *Vitalia*, September 2014, 52.

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