

## **Sympathy for the Devil: Sympathy, Empathy and Compassion - from altruism to natural reality.**

To begin with, here are some useful definitions of these words:-

**Empathy** is the capacity to recognize and, to some extent, share feelings that are being experienced by another sentient being. To empathize is to respond to another's perceived emotional state by experiencing feelings of a similar sort.

**Sympathy** is a social affinity in which one person stands with another person, closely understanding his or her feelings. Sympathy not only includes empathizing, but also entails having a positive regard or a non-fleeting concern for the other person. Sympathy is usually making known one's understanding of another's unhappiness or suffering, especially in relation to grief. Sympathy can also refer to being aware of other people's emotions.

**Compassion** (from Latin: "co-suffering") is seen as a virtue - one in which the emotional capacities of empathy and sympathy (for the suffering of others) are regarded as a part of love itself (whatever that means here!) and a cornerstone of greater social interconnectedness and humanism - foundational to the highest principles in philosophy, society, and personhood.

These three expressions are often tied together in conversation, but in order to comprehend these things we also need a clear understanding of the nature of what emotion is as differentiated from feeling, and what suffering is.

As expressed in other articles emotions are all forms of contraction of the bodyspirit into what we can call a mental-emotional complex. What we call the "positive emotions" are not emotions at all, the feelings of joyfulness, bliss, peace, contentment, love, these are very different from the nature of emotions such as hyper-excitement and anxiety/worry, anger, jealousy, desire, grief, fearfulness, confusion, frustration. The "positive emotions" are the background, the emotions are the foreground. The emotions are associated and attached to the mental-emotional framework called "self" - this self is such that all feelings are owned and bound to it, so the construction of self believes it is alive and it is experiencing all these things, this is the egoic "I" state.

Hence we can see much of the nature of sympathy and empathy are to do with feeling the emotional state of a person and recognizing its existence. However the other aspect of this process is that the empathizer or sympathizer should in a way actually be able to feel the "emotion" of another person. Of course this is commonplace and occurs all the time but whether this is a "virtuous" thing is deeply questioned in this article. The point of being able to really sense a person's feeling is simply about sensitivity. Sensitivity is like being able to feel something when it is hot or cold. When there is emotion, then feeling and instinct understands that there is a situation of emotion occurring. Cats and dogs and

babies know when an adult is in an emotional state and it is very interesting to see their reaction. Very often there is an immediate response of either a fearful flight away from the situation or an immediate inquisitiveness, a drawing towards it, almost with surprise and interest in order to investigate what's going on and the commotion in the energetic atmosphere. It is interesting that coming into contact with an animal or a child at a time of mental-emotional trauma can either make the pattern worse if the person perceives they are not understood by the child or animal, or it can have the opposite effect of breaking a person out of that state when it is sensed that there is something outside of "self".

However in all these cases the actual passing on of the emotional feeling from one person to another will mean they have a belief in a separate "self" and are feeling something similar to the person, based on past-based similar experience. In fact both people are in a state of disconnection from one another because they are within their own worlds of "self" but at the same time resonating at the same emotional frequency. This is a passing on of a dis-ease state from one person to another.

Practitioners of healing or medicine and those engaged in sensitively understanding patients are often told that showing signs of being able to empathize or sympathize with a patient's difficulties is key to engaging in a "sharing" of emotion and that this will bring about a realization of how to overcome them through the connection of a common experience. However this concept is deeply surreal.

The state of emotional trauma is part of the dis-ease pattern. If a practitioner is in empathy or sympathy with a patient they are actually in touch with the egotism of "self" within themselves. This is all related to suffering, so to suffer together is something akin to adding onto or exaggerating the problem. This is why practitioners often talk of empathy rather than sympathy, as empathy is a slightly more detached way of describing sympathy. So to empathize could be described as a milder form of sympathy, but they are still very similar. What is seldom understood is the difference between empathy and simply feeling sensitively.

Animals and infants are constantly feeling with all their senses, they are involved in sensing the whole world without judgment and also without the replaying of past mental-emotional patterns. They are within what we could call the natural state. If a mother cries and is very upset, while a child may have many reactions to this it is very unlikely that the child itself will burst into tears. The child is more likely to react with surprise and come up to her to see what's going on, or can actually be frightened by the reaction and retract from the mother's emotional state. The mother will be unlikely to tell the child that he or she is not "empathetic", believing the child is innocent and therefore could never "understand". In fact the child profoundly understands, he/she is feeling the energetics of the emotional expression of the mother, but doesn't engage with the dis-ease itself, one could say that it is immune from this very adult illness. The stereotypical male reaction of the woman's partner, on seeing her emotional state, may be to try and work out what's wrong in order to "fix it" or in other words to "stop it" or bring things back to a "normal" state that he can cope with. Or he may ignore the situation, but either

response will further fuel her emotional state with or without the additional processes of blame or manipulative coercion. This behaviour can of course be reversed, but is usually demonstrated in male-female situations.

The male exhibits something different, not empathy, sympathy or sensitivity but generally a kind of numbness or mental detachment from the situation. This is commonly what woman blame men for in relationships. The key problem is that both male and female are in states of separation and dis-ease of contraction. The female response is to go into the contraction held within the physical body, this is called emotion, for the male it is the aspect of contraction held within the mentality, hence we can together call it mental-emotional contraction. It is interesting that people who are in emotional states believe that everyone around them is being “insensitive” yet they cannot see how insensitive the emotion *itself* is to everything that is around them in that moment.

Although emotional expressions seem very much more sensitive than mental ones they are in fact both a form of numbness to what is going on in natural reality, one is just louder and more explosive than the other. When emotions are deeply hidden and not expressed, sealed within a mental contraction, this is more of a cold-logic mentality pattern and is stereotypically more male. Some people feel more emotional and less mental contraction, while others feel more mental and less emotional and this is usually, though not always, female and male respectively.

However, the infant and the animal have neither of these processes going on and so in fact these are the only two “healing” expressions spoken about here. The reason that pets and children are known to help adults is that they are said to “love unconditionally” but what this means is actually they don't care if there is mental-emotional contraction because they are not resonating/viewing the world in this frequency/way, they are just being. There is no sympathy or empathy, there is just a sensitive response to life happening even though it may not necessarily be *wanted* by the person in the mental-emotional state. The animal and the child are expressions of what is behind the mental-emotional contraction of “self”, our natural instinct and its awareness. In the ancient wilderness if a man or woman was in a mental-emotional state they were much more likely to be picked off by a predator for food or to be unaware of situations of danger.

The point is that in healing it is the natural and the infant that un-learn our ways of understanding, and the recognition that things are truly in natural reality rather than in empathetic state. Neither sympathy nor empathy is required for healing, just simply natural sensitivity and instinct. This is deeply impersonal and yet deeply intimate at the same time. This may be seen as a cold response by those who want the other person to be “empathetic”, or for those who want the other person to be more “logical and clinical” the response can seem too warm and close. In either case, the practitioner's role (for it is only a role) is not to be coerced into an alliance with the state of dis-ease desired by the person as this will only validate their sense of “self”. In order for true healing to occur the “self” can find no place to attach itself to and as a result healing focuses on that which is behind the mental-emotional contraction, without getting directly involved and entangled in its web of symptoms.

Practitioners who either go to considerable lengths to please, impress or pander to a patient with a highly empathetic approach, having long drawn-out sessions, or who are numbed, cold and clinical to the emotions of a person and have very short sessions, are eccentric to the empty-Centre which underpins reality.

The empathetic and sympathetic approaches are very much tied into ideas about “compassion” and altruism. The idea of love and truly understanding the nature of unconditional love is expressed in my article “Real Love”. The point is that compassion has much more to do with an acceptance of unconditional reality as a deeply impersonal and deeply intimate paradox rather than it having anything at all to do with sympathy and empathy. Sensitivity is all that is behind the contraction of “self”. Therefore it is a totally surreal ideology to see that the ideal of compassion as being an altruistic state, which is connected to a romanticized idea of love and a sympathetic/empathetic existence of humankind, this merely prolongs the notion of being trapped within a separate self. Thereby emotional expression and as such the altruism of “compassionate-love” will hinder the process of any change in the present situation, perhaps only a movement from head-based contraction to heart and body-based contraction.

The real change, which is now gradually occurring in humans, comes about when there is a spontaneous shift to a realization that the drama of the emotional world and the aloof headiness of the mental contraction are both viewing reality through a straw.

Underpinning this is a place where all is accepted as it is. There isn't a judgment of how empathetic or sympathetic a person is or the “amount” of compassion they can muster, but simply a realization that the mental-emotional continuum which is bound to “self” is a powerful charge of energy with no “anchor”, thereby feeling constantly separate. It is true that all things can be healed by love, but it is also true that all things ARE love, so you can't go anywhere to get it! You can't “be loving” or “be kind”. Kindness is not “good for you” as Dr. David Hamilton suggests, true love is very “bad” for “you”, it kills the “you” altogether! Love is already present, there is nothing that needs doing. In fact as we are propelled towards seeking the so-called positive, the so-called loving and the so called-compassionate this causes us to miss all aspects of what this truly means. We constantly try to “fix” what is broken and yet none of it is broken, merely hidden from view. Healing is relief, relief is letting go, letting go means something has been added-on, some burden that is carried, healing is always a lessening and not a gathering process. There is no addition that can help to heal. Healing is always a relinquishing, not forcibly or because you are told to, but spontaneously at a point of ripeness of life. It's out of “your” hands.

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