

## **Emotional Contagion, Emotional Resonance, and Responsibility for Shared Agency**

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“Emotional contagion” names the tendency to converge emotionally with others by mimicry (Hatfield et al., 1993). The imitation mechanism is supposed to explain a distinctive variety of phenomena where emotions are activated by unconsciously echoing others’ emotions, rather than by attending directly to others or responding to the object of their attention.

Such phenomena include instances of shared (practical and epistemic) agency which are perplexing on two counts. First, they seem to disprove the view that emotions are activated by appraisals i.e. evaluations of the stimuli in relation to the well-being of the subject (Lazarus 1991). Second, actions generated by emotional contagion challenge the standards of moral responsibility grounded on intentionality: they seem to be too complex and socially mediated to be comprehended by the same standards that governing individual actions or actions shared via intentions.

Building upon recent work on neuroscience, this paper takes emotions to be embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended. As complex processes, emotions concur to generate forms of massively shared agency which are not articulated by intentions or plans (vs. Bratman 2018, Shapiro 2014). Yet (practical and epistemic) actions generated through emotional resonance can be genuine exercise of reflective agency and raise the issue of the agent’s individual moral responsibility. This is because emotions do play a role in modulating and regulating our (emotional, creedal, and agential) convergence with others. This is because they are reflexive and, as such, they enter epistemic and practical reflection, and counterfactual reasoning (Brady 2013, Gendler 2006, Mackenzie 2002).

The trust of the argument is that to correctly identify the standards of attributability and moral responsibility for shared actions driven by emotional resonance, we need a conception of autonomy robust enough to accommodate the reflexive functions of emotions and the complex normative roles that they play in self-governance and deliberation.

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