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## Shared Emotions

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2012

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Salmela , M 2012 , ' Shared Emotions ' , Philosophical explorations : an international journal for the philosophy of mind and action , vol. 15 , no. 1 , pp. 33-46 . <https://doi.org/10.1080/13869795.2012.647355>

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/233169>

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13869795.2012.647355>

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### Abstract

Existing scientific concepts of group or shared or collective emotion fail to appreciate several elements of collectivity in such emotions. Moreover, the idea of shared emotions is threatened by the individualism of emotions that comes in three forms: ontological, epistemological, and physical. The problem is whether or not we can provide a plausible account of “straightforwardly shared” emotions without compromising our intuitions about the individualism of emotions. I discuss two philosophical accounts of shared emotions that explain the collectivity of emotions in terms of their intentional structure: Margaret Gilbert’s plural subject account, and Hans Bernhard Schmid’s phenomenological account. I argue that Gilbert’s view fails because it relegates affective experience into a contingent role in emotions and because a joint commitment to feel amounts to the creation of a *feeling rule* rather than to an emotion. The problems with Schmid’s view are twofold: first, a phenomenological fusion of feelings is not necessary for shared emotions, and second, Schmid is not sensitive enough to different forms of shared concerns. I then outline my own typology that distinguishes between weakly, moderately, and strongly shared emotions on the basis of the participants’ shared concerns of different degree of collectivity on the one hand and the synchronization of their emotional responses on the other hand. All kind of shared emotions in my typology are consistent with the individualism of emotions, while the question about “straightforward sharing” is argued to be of secondary importance.

Keywords: shared emotions, shared concerns, Gilbert, Schmid, Tuomela

### Introduction

Emotions move people, both individuals and collectives. Private anger typically associates with a desire to revenge for a conspicuous and undeserved slight to oneself or to one’s own group, as Aristotle already pointed out, whereas public anger about social injustice breeds protest and revolt. Indeed, anger is one of those collective emotions, along with guilt and shame, whose role in social change has been highlighted in recent empirical research of social and political

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movements (e.g. Flam and King 2005; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001). Collective guilt, especially, has been discussed in anthropology, sociology, social psychology, and philosophy (e.g. Konzelmann Ziv 2007; Forrest 2006; Tollefsen 2006; Branscombe and Doosje 2004). Important as these studies are, they have not brought considerable insight into guilt or other collective emotions as *emotions of a certain kind*.

Existing scientific concepts of collective or shared or group emotion are theoretically impoverished as they fail to appreciate several elements of collectivity in these emotions. Researchers influenced by social identity theory and self-categorization theory (e.g. Tajfel and Turner 1986) maintain that people can experience emotions *as* both individuals and group members. When individuals identify with a group or think of themselves in terms of a particular social identity, they can experience ‘group-based emotions’ when something relevant happens to their ingroup or salient social identity (e.g. Smith, Seger, and Mackie 2007; Kessler and Hollbach 2005). However, these researchers do not typically distinguish group-based emotions that people experience in separation from one another from those emotions that they experience in group contexts. Neither do they analyze the *type* of identification with a social group or an identity, as distinct from its intensity. Yet these differences are probably relevant both for the phenomenal experience of shared emotions and for their function in social dynamics. Therefore, insofar as empirical researchers reduce the qualitative specificity of group emotions to either “similarities in group members’ emotional experiences or behaviors” (Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead 2005, 87), or to an aggregate “group affective tone” (George 1996) or “affective team composition” (Barsade and Gibson, 1998) or “emotional climate” (de Rivera 1992) that emerges in a group setting, these researchers lose the sense in which a collective emotion is both phenomenologically felt and functionally constitutes *our* emotion that *we* experience *together* as members of a particular group; not merely “something that is sufficiently alike to be identified as the common emotion ... [of] some aggregate of individuals” (Kemper 2002, 61).

There are various reasons for which researchers, scientists and philosophers alike, have shied away from collective emotions. Hans Bernhard Schmid (2009) summarizes the main problems with sharing emotions into three theses of individualism about emotions: ontological, epistemological, and physical. Only individuals feel emotions; they feel only their own emotions; and they feel their emotions in their own bodies.<sup>1</sup> Schmid suggests that a plausible notion of a collectively intentional emotion must allow sharing in a *straightforward* sense, in which “sharing is not a matter of type, or of qualitative identity (i.e. of having different things that are somehow similar), but a matter of token, or *numerical identity*” (Schmid 2009, 69). An example of the latter kind of emotion is parents’ grief over the dead body of their child. Schmid agrees with the German phenomenologist Max Scheler who claims that the bereaved parents feel this grief together (*Mit-einanderfühlen*) rather than separately. Yet, as Schmid observes, this kind of robust sharing appears to be in conflict with the three theses of individualism about emotions that permeate “not only most theories of affectivity but large parts of our pre-theoretical views (i.e. folk psychology) as well” (Schmid 2009, 70). The problem is then whether or not we can provide a plausible account of “straightforwardly shared” emotions without light-heartedly compromising our intuitions about the individualism of emotions, and if not, whether “straightforward sharing” is necessary for collective emotions in the first place.

In this article, I discuss two philosophical accounts of collective emotions and present a new framework that purports to avoid the problems of the previous accounts by distinguishing between shared emotions of different types. The first account by Margaret Gilbert has already received some critical attention, whereas the second is from Schmid’s recent book *Plural Action* (2009). Gilbert follows strong cognitivism in rendering emotions as evaluative judgments and feelings as sensations that have only a contingent role in emotion. Schmid, in turn, affiliates with a more recent phenomenological turn in the philosophy of emotions.<sup>2</sup> In this approach, emotions are modeled on perception as intentional feelings with a content that is at the same time both

intentional and phenomenal. I suggest that both Gilbert and Schmid go too far in their respective directions, Gilbert toward cognitivism and Schmid toward feeling-theory, and that an adequate account of the nature of emotions can be found between these opposites.

### **Gilbert on collective guilt and other collective emotions**

Margaret Gilbert presents her pioneering account on collective emotions, and guilt in particular, in her article “Collective Guilt and Collective Guilt Feelings” (2002)<sup>3</sup>. Her argument for the possibility of collective emotions proceeds from ordinary language. “That people are prepared to speak in this way, and frequently do, at least suggests that they think that there is something, something real, to which they refer: the feelings of a group” (Gilbert 2002, 118). An immediate worry is that only individuals have feelings, whereas groups do not have consciousness and therefore cannot feel anything either. Gilbert defuses this problem by adopting strong cognitivism about emotions. Thus, she argues that in order to feel guilt, an individual person must have certain thoughts about his or her situation and perhaps some dispositions to act in certain ways. In guilt, these thoughts concern one’s having done something wrong, and the action tendencies include apologizing or restitution. Gilbert concludes: “Perhaps, then, such cognitions lie at the heart of emotion. Perhaps specific ‘feeling-sensations’ are not essential, but only frequent concomitants.” (ibid., 119). This is a controversial view about the nature of emotions and feelings, as several commentators have pointed out (Wilkins 2002; Konzelmann Ziv 2007; Schmid 2009), but it allows Gilbert to construct a straightforward account of shared emotions on the basis of sharing their cognitive content.

Gilbert distinguishes her account of genuine(ly) collective guilt feelings from two accounts of aggregate collective feelings: feelings of personal guilt and feelings of membership

guilt. The former guilt over some personal wrongdoing or over some acts that directly contributed to one's groups' collectively performed wrongdoing does not qualify as an instance of collective guilt as it does not constitute guilt over a wrongful collective action. Membership guilt fares somewhat better in this respect as it is guilt over some action that the members of one's group have collectively performed on the basis of a joint commitment. Gilbert, however, is not happy, because the feeling still does not have a collective subject. Individual group members' guilt over the group's actions is not the same thing as the group's guilt over its own actions.

Therefore, we need a plural subject account of collective guilt feelings. Gilbert (2002, 139) formulates this account in two ways:

- (i) For us *collectively to feel guilt over our action A* is for us to be jointly committed to feeling guilt as a body over our action A.
- (ii) For us *collectively to feel guilt over our action A* is for us to constitute a plural subject of a feeling of guilt over our action A.

A significant difference to other forms of collective guilt feeling is the joint commitment to feeling guilt as a body. Gilbert presents anecdotal evidence in favor of the idea that subjects can jointly commit themselves to feel emotions. Further still, she claims that a properly installed authority can commit an entire group to feel in a certain way and that the members of the group are bound by such commitment even if they are unaware of it. While it is unrealistic to assume that an authority could commit all or even most members of his or her group to actually experiencing emotions, a joint commitment can be expressed by acting and talking in ways that are consistent with the relevant emotion, such as characterizing the action in question as morally wrong. Gilbert claims that the feelings of collective guilt exist in and through the individual group members' pangs or twinges. But since collective guilt feelings do not have a specific

phenomenology – “a pang is a pang is a pang” (ibid., 141) – they can be distinguished from other pangs only by their responsiveness to the plural subject’s collective guilt. Thus, for instance, a collectively intentional pang should not go away unless the group members jointly decide that the action they collectively performed was not wrongful after all.

As I have pointed out, Gilbert has been criticized for relegating feelings into a contingent role in emotions. This makes it easy for her to explain the intentionality of shared emotions in terms of the intentionality of their constitutive shared cognitions, desires, and intentions. However, since the problems with Gilbert’s strong cognitivism have been discussed elsewhere, I focus on another weakness in her view. This is the idea that a group of individuals, or some authoritative representative of theirs, can commit the group to feeling an emotion as a body. It is one thing to make a commitment, either individual or joint, to feel an emotion and another to hope that the feeling emerges, for we cannot make ourselves feel at will. One can pave the way to an emotion by attending to *reasons* for feeling it, such as to one’s responsibility for a wrong to another party, but there is no direct way to summon an emotion by committing oneself to feeling it. Instead, we *indirectly* commit ourselves to emotions by jointly committing ourselves to goals and other concerns, for such commitment rationally commits us to feeling *several* actual and counterfactual emotions, depending on our success or failure in reaching the goal – joy if the goal is reached, fear if our progress toward the goal is threatened, disappointment if we fail to reach the goal, and so on (see Helm 2010).

Gilbert recognizes this problem as she grants that a commitment to have an emotion need not be expressed in terms of feelings; acting and speaking consistently with the emotion suffices. Still, if many or most members of the group do not actually experience the relevant emotion, it is questionable in what sense we can talk about the plural subject type of collective emotion as an *emotion* in the first place (Wilkins 2002). Indeed, a joint commitment to collectively feel an emotion amounts to the creation of a group-social *feeling rule* for a group of

individuals, but not necessarily to an actual emotion.<sup>4</sup> Membership emotions are then the most we get as far as collective emotions are concerned.<sup>5</sup>

### **Schmid on shared feelings**

Schmid avoids the problems of Gilbert's view by starting from a more plausible notion of emotion. He follows Peter Goldie in rendering emotions as both intentional and phenomenal *feelings toward*.<sup>6</sup> It is characteristic of these feelings that in spite of their physiological basis, feelings toward are *psychic feelings* that are not experienced as localized bodily sensations but "as if they were in the soul itself," to use Descartes' expression. These feelings are intentional affective perceptions of external objects in terms of evaluative properties characteristic of the emotion type in question. Thus, I feel an attacking dog as dangerous, and a reckless fellow driver as offensive. "Danger" and "offense" are the *formal objects* of the respective feelings and account for the *mode* of these feelings. Furthermore, Schmid follows Bennett Helm (2001) in distinguishing between *target* and *focus* in the content of feelings. The target is the intentional object of feeling, while the focus is an object in the background of the feeling which is related to the target in such a way that renders the mode of the feeling intelligible. If a dangerous dog is attacking me, the dog is the target of my fear, while I am its focus. Finally, Schmid remarks that feelings presuppose *concerns* that make the relation between focus and target relevant to the subject. Without concern for survival, security, well-being, attachment, honor, and so on, nothing would matter to us so as to affect us emotionally. While target and focus are important, Schmid suggests that only shared concerns are necessary for shared feelings.

Schmid's problem, as pointed out above, is to explain how some feelings could qualify as collective in spite of the ontological, epistemological, and physical individualism of feelings.



The physical individualism according to which people feel their emotions in their own bodies has already been called into question by reference to psychic feelings that are felt as affective perceptions of external objects. The ontological individuality of emotions, on the other hand, is beyond doubt: only individual subjects feel emotions, as Schmid observes. However, this is not a problem for collective intentionality, for shared beliefs and intentions are also realized in the minds of individuals, and there is a considerable consensus that it is the content or mode of having those mental states that is collective rather than their ontological subject. Therefore, shared feelings only require that there are exceptions to epistemological individualism, according to which people feel only their own emotions. But this too is strange: how could we feel someone else's emotions other than our own?

Schmid presents a phenomenological argument which purports to show that individual subjects can *interpret* some of their conscious states as *ours* rather than as their own private states. The argument is founded on the idea that “all conscious states are – pre-reflectively and un-thematically – *conceived* and *interpreted* [with respect to their *content*, *mode*, and *subject*] by the subjects who have them” (Schmid 2009, 77; original italics). Schmid suggests that in most cases we do not experience our conscious states as private or personal but as anonymous or apersonal. Thus, he claims that in everyday life, “we do not take our thoughts or feelings to be *our own* in any meaningful sense” (ibid., 78). Therefore, it may be possible for an individual A to interpret his or her feeling as the feeling of another individual B, as when Bill Clinton claimed that he feels the pain of the AIDS-activist Bob Rafsky. Schmid is not naïve about the sincerity of this claim, but he asks us not to dismiss the possibility that individual subjects can take part in each others' feelings by virtue of interpreting their feelings as part of *your* or *our* feeling. When this happens, the *phenomenological subject* of feeling differs from the *ontological subject*. The ontological subject is individual A, but the phenomenological subject is either individual B or a

collective “we.” Accordingly, there are two ways of counting the number of feelings: either by ontological subject, or by phenomenological subject.

Schmid’s example of a shared feeling, adopted from Scheler, is the shared grief of parents over the death of their beloved child. Scheler suggests that the bereaved parents feel this emotion together (*Mit-einanderfühlen*) rather than separately. Here we have both shared concerns and a phenomenological collective subject that together constitute necessary and sufficient conditions of shared feelings for Schmid. While sharing a feeling, subjects can have veridical self-awareness of their ontological separateness; indeed they must have such awareness according to Schmid. Further still, the feelings of participating individuals may differ from each other in terms of their *intensity* and *quality*. Such differences appear to undermine the idea of shared feelings, but Schmid argues that they need not if the participants’ feelings “match” with those of the others “according to the different roles the participants play in the joint activity” (ibid., 79). Thus, for instance, joy at the successful first performance of a symphony may constitute a shared feeling even if the composer, the stage manager, the man at the triangle, and a member of the audience feel the joy about the performance in a somewhat different manner: the composer as exuberant exaltation, the man at the triangle as silent contentment, a member of the audience as delight, and so on. Schmid comments: “Thus the numerical identity of the feeling does not preclude difference, but the difference here is one between *aspects* of one feeling rather than one between numerically different feelings” (ibid., 82).

The first problem with Schmid’s account concerns the phenomenological fusion of feelings. I believe that it is a contingent rather than a necessary condition of shared emotions. The main reason is phenomenological, namely the elusiveness of this experience.<sup>7</sup> True enough, people may *pre-reflectively* interpret and experience their feelings as *your* or *our*, but such experience vanishes as soon as the ontological individual becomes *reflexively* aware of the feeling as *her* or *his*. This may happen any time during a fused experience, for, however initially

interpreted as to its subject, I can always step back from my experience and recognize it as *mine*. This kind of *veridical reflexive self-awareness* dispels the phenomenological collective subject, for it seems impossible to be aware of oneself experiencing *our* feeling, except in an aggregative sense, especially if each person's feelings are qualitatively dissimilar to those of others. Indeed, there must surely be some limit to the qualitative differences between the feelings of individuals who participate in a joint activity beyond which a phenomenological fusion of their feelings is not possible. However, since this question is obviously empirical, I shall not discuss it further. Instead, I focus on another problem with a phenomenological fusion of feelings: its inability to indicate strong sharing if it is possible for individuals to experience such fusion in the context of otherwise dissimilar emotions. Schmid's two examples of shared feelings serve as evidence for this worry.

The parents who grieve over the death of their beloved child shared a concern for the child and its well-being in a jointly committed and deeply embedded sense as this concern emerged from the parent's love for the child *as* parents and their reciprocal affective ties as a couple. This concern was deeply embedded in the parents' identities since events relevant to the concern affected all aspects of their lives. However, the concert example is very different. Here the participants include an audience; members of the orchestra; the composer; and the stage manager. All participants share a concern about the success of the performance; indeed the musicians have committed themselves to offering an excellent performance. Yet the audience, the composer, and the stage manager do not participate in the joint action of playing the symphony; their role is attentive listening, at most. A successful performance elicits joy among everyone present, perhaps even a phenomenological fusion of feelings. Nevertheless, the emotions of the participants are significantly dissimilar to each other. For instance, while rejoicing in the successful performance together with the others, the musicians also feel satisfied with *their* performance as an orchestra and with *their* doing their parts in the performance.

Further still, the musicians and the composer feel proud of the performance, unlike the audience and the stage manager, who have no active role in the production and performance of the symphony. I believe that these differences reflect subtle differences in the participants' concerns. The musicians share a concern to produce an excellent performance by virtue of their professional identity and collective commitment as a group, whereas the audience and the stage manager have only convergent private concerns about the performance. Accordingly, I argue that the musicians' shared concern is *more strongly* collective than the shared concern of the audience and the stage manager.

Schmid purports to show that individuals can share concerns even if the target and focus of their emotions differ. However, by doing so, he focuses his attention on shared concerns of one type, overlapping private concerns, such as the concern for one's family members. It is true that such concerns are psychologically strong and universal among all humans, and they sometimes allow us to empathize and emotionally share with others who are similarly concerned for their own family members. Nevertheless, in these situations, we are concerned for different particular individuals; you about your family members and I about mine. This is different from cases in which individuals share concerns about the same object or event, such as their child, the success of their favorite club, or their winning a game as a team. I suggest that the latter concerns are shared in a more robust sense than overlapping private concerns that people share by virtue of their common humanity. Accordingly, I propose that a typology of collective concerns provides a more subtle standard for distinguishing between shared emotions of different kinds than a phenomenological fusion of feelings.

## **Toward an alternative account of shared emotions**

I have argued that both Gilbert and Schmid fail to present plausible accounts of shared emotions. Their insights complement each other, highlighting important aspects of shared emotions, but in a manner that requires elaboration. Schmid aptly emphasizes the relevance of shared affectivity, which is prominent in Émile Durkheim's early studies of religious rituals as well as in the recent sociological theorizing of Randall Collins. I believe that the latter's detailed analysis of the emergence of collective emotions in social interaction rituals helps us to flesh out Schmid's claim about a phenomenological fusion of feelings. Yet I side with Gilbert in arguing that the most significant differences between shared emotions of different kinds lie in their intentional content and background, rather than in their qualitative affective experience. Unlike Gilbert, however, I do not believe that we can commit ourselves to emotions or their constitutive evaluative judgments. Emotional appraisals are typically so fast and modular that it is impossible to *make* let alone *accept* them collectively (e.g. Scherer 2001). Sharing an emotional appraisal can therefore be only a matter of converging on such appraisal with other individuals. But how can we understand the collectivity of emotional appraisals if not in terms of their collective generation or acceptance? My proposal focuses on shared concerns of different kinds.

My notion of concern is similar to Robert Roberts' (2003) who uses "concern" as a general term to denote desires and aversions as well as attachments, interests, and cares that ground our emotional appraisals and responses.<sup>8</sup> Concerns psychologically underlie emotions as perceived changes in their status evoke emotions about the perceived cause of those changes in the agent whose concern is affected favorably or adversely. If an agent's felt evaluations and evaluative judgments constitute a coherent pattern around the concern such that fear is felt when the concern is threatened, relief when the threat dissipates, anger at those responsible for the threat, pride in one's own furthering of the concern, gratitude to others who further the concern, shame of one's neglecting the concern, and so on, then this rational pattern of interconnected

evaluations also manifests the value of the concern for the agent, as Helm (2001) argues.

However, concerns do not *conceptually* involve value and commitment, because some concerns do not afford a coherent evaluative perspective but only a partial one. A drug addict may be psychologically strongly concerned to get his next fix, satisfied when he gets it, and angry at those who try to interfere with this drug use, but if the same agent at other times sincerely judges that he should quit, feels ashamed of his relapses, and proud of his periods of abstinence, then it seems that it is the concern for abstinence rather than the concern for drug use that has value for the agent and to which he has committed himself by virtue of his coherent pattern of evaluative judgments and reflexive felt evaluations that focuses on abstinence.

I suggest that people share concerns in the weakest form of collectivity if they have *overlapping private concerns*. Insofar as people care about their own survival, security, attachment relations, health, wealth, happiness, and so on, these are private concerns. So are altruistic concerns insofar as we have them for private reasons, such as personal sympathy for the poor. Following Tuomela's (2007) terminology for shared attitudes of different degree of collectivity, I call concerns of this type *plain I-mode* concerns. Individuals can establish groups whose members cooperate in promoting their convergent private concerns. Groups of this kind may include economic sharing groups and self-help groups, such as dieting groups and alcoholics anonymous. The fact that private concerns are general or even universal among all humans does not amount to their collectivity but merely to their *commonality*, which is a different thing.

Concerns can be collective in a stronger sense when individuals are committed to some concern, [in part because of] believing that the others in the group have the same concern, and also believing this is mutually believed in the group (Tuomela 2007, 66). Thus, for instance, if I as a Liverpool fan am concerned about the future of this prestigious football club, not only do I believe that other Liverpool fans have the same concern, but also that other Liverpool fans

believe the same about my and other Liverpool fans having this concern. The bracketed clause above refers to the fact that many of our shared concerns (as well as beliefs and desires) are *socially grounded*. We come to have concerns because we believe that other members of our group have them, where this belief is *either a reason or a cause* for our adopting the same concern. The commitment to the concern is still private, but the concern is social, the benefit of the group, unlike in the first case where the concern is personal. Tuomela characterizes this type of collectivity as *weak* or *I-mode collectivity*. In my terminology, concerns of this kind are *moderately collective*. The point of I-mode is that the commitment is up to the individual to revise and renounce for private reasons alone. Groups based on concerns of this kind may include unorganized fan groups as well as social and religious movements.

The strongest mode of collectivity in sharing concerns is founded on group members' collective commitment. In addition, there is a mutual belief among the group members that they share the same concern to which they have collectively committed themselves. Through their collective commitment, the group members adopt the concern as *theirs* and socially commit themselves to each other as well as to the group to uphold the concern. On the one hand, a collective commitment provides the group members authoritative reasons to act, think, want, and feel in ways that are in accordance with the concern. On the other hand, the members' ability to act, think, want, and feel in these *group-social* ways in the relevant situations testifies whether or not the members have committed themselves to the concern. Moreover, the group members are allowed to revise their commitment only for reasons that are acceptable from the group's point of view. The collective commitment also implies that the group members necessarily "share the same fate" when acting as group members. This idea is explicated by what Tuomela calls the Collectivity Condition. Formulated for shared intentions, this condition states that a shared intention is satisfied for one group member if and only if it is satisfied for all group members.<sup>9</sup> For instance, individual players of a sports team win a match if and only if

their team wins the match. Other examples of groups with shared concerns in the strongest *we-mode* sense of collectivity may include religious sects, workgroups, theater ensembles, bands, orchestras, friends, and parents.

Collective commitment to a concern emerges from a collective acceptance that individuals give as group members; typically in the form of an explicit agreement. This kind of voluntaristic commitment fits Tuomela's paradigmatic examples of *we-mode* groups that carry pianos, paint houses, or clean parks. However, it does not fit those cases that intuitively involve shared concerns of the strongest kind, such as Scheler's example of mourning parents. Those parents may not have given an explicit collective acceptance of their strongly shared concern for the child's well-being during the child's life. Instead, they may have grown into this kind of understanding of their relationship to the child and each other. The parents' emotions, attitudes, and actions also testify of such concern if they share a single evaluative and practical perspective whose focus is the child and its well-being (Helm 2001; 2010). This perspective reveals that in their relation to the child, the parents constitute a *we-mode* group whose *ethos* involves concern for the child's well-being, even if they had not explicitly committed themselves to this concern. Indeed, Tuomela allows that the "thinnest" form of collective acceptance of "is based on some kind of shared implicit understanding of the situation and the other participants' relevant mental attitudes" (Tuomela 2007, 92). Nevertheless, this kind of commitment is psychologically strong, because the parents' strongly shared concern for the child's well-being is supported by their mutually convergent private concerns with the same aim.<sup>10</sup>

While shared concerns are the most important attitudinal background condition for shared emotions, they are usually embedded within a more comprehensive set of attitudes that subjects of these emotions share. People who share emotions often have a history of some common experiences in the context of shared social practices as well as memories thereof, as Schmid



(2009), Konzelmann Ziv (2009), and – most comprehensively – von Scheve (2011) have pointed out. In addition to concerns, group members also share other cognitive and conative attitudes in a weakly, moderately, or strongly collective sense, which is analogous to sharing concerns (see Tuomela 2007). Together such attitudes constitute *the intentional background* from which shared emotions can emerge in situations that impinge on some shared concern of individuals. The embedded context influences the way in which individuals emotionally appraise the situation. Convergent emotional appraisals depend then on sharing at least *some* other attitudes besides concerns, of which the latter are still the most important because without them, shared emotions would not emerge in the first place.

The typology of shared concerns purports to account for the collectivity of emotional appraisals, but it does not suffice to explain the collectivity of emotional experience. There is evidence that subjects who emotionally appraise an event similarly are likely to undergo similar physiological, behavioral and phenomenal changes as constitutive elements of their emotional responses (e.g. Scherer 2001; 2009). However, mere contingent similarity among people's emotional responses does not amount to the collectivity of those responses, let alone to a phenomenological fusion of individual feelings. The individual responses must be *synchronized* in order to produce a shared affective experience, as Collins (2004) points out.

Collins analyzes the emergence of collective emotions in interaction rituals. Ritual ingredients include a group of individuals who are separated from others by some barrier. Group members focus their attention on some common object or activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become aware of their shared focus of attention. Finally, group members share a common mood or emotion or feeling.<sup>11</sup> The initiating feelings spread and intensify in ritualized joint activities, such as songs, dances, chants, and games, through emotional contagion, “the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to

converge emotionally” (Hatfield, Caccioppo, and Rapson 1994, 5; see also Chartrand and Bargh 1999) as well as through the group members’ awareness of their shared experience. Emotional contagion, in turn, is subserved by the activation of mirror neurons and shared neural representations in the brain (Decety and Chaminade 2003; Becchio and Bertone 2004). The result is collective effervescence: “a high degree of absorption in emotional entrainment, whatever the emotion may be” (Collins 2004, 108).

Collins has no role for shared concerns or appraisals in the emergence of collective emotions. He believes that successful interaction rituals produce emotional energy, which attaches to contingently available symbols – emblems, signs, slogans, buzzwords, or other representations – that serve as reinforcers in the group’s future interaction rituals. Yet it is plausible to assume that some shared beliefs and attitudes are preconditions of collective emotions rather than their outcomes, as Durkheim (1984), with reference to “collective consciousness”, already argued.<sup>12</sup> By making room for shared concerns and appraisals as either antecedents or constituents of shared emotions, we can add a *rational* impetus to the causal mechanisms of attentional deployment, emotional contagion, facial mimicry, and behavioral entrainment that contribute to the synchronization of individuals’ emotional responses in interaction situations. Indeed, I believe that a convergence and synchronization of both cognitive and non-cognitive elements of emotion is required for such non-reflexive absorption in shared affect that sometimes takes the form of a phenomenological fusion of feelings. Yet when it doesn’t take this form, the synchronization produces wide convergence among the participants’ feelings, with a mutual awareness of this convergence. I propose that some kind of shared affective experience, either phenomenologically fused or aggregative, is thus the other main aspect of shared emotions, along with convergent individual emotional appraisals. However, since it seems possible to experience highly synchronized affective experiences in the context of

all kinds of shared emotions, the intentional dimension of collectivity is nevertheless more important than the affective dimension for the overall collectivity of these emotions.

### **A typology of shared emotions**

I suggest that we should understand the collectivity of emotions as a continuum rather than as an on/off question. If collectivity is a matter of sharing emotions with others, then it seems possible to share emotions to a lesser or greater degree. Above I have distinguished three types of shared concerns: weakly, moderately, and strongly collective. Now I suggest that these concerns provide the main criteria for a typology of *weakly*, *moderately*, and *strongly* shared emotions. I suggest that these emotions differ from each other also in other significant respects that include their constitution and their role in social dynamics. In general, participants of all shared emotions must experience the same type of emotion, such as joy, pride, fear, or sadness, and they must share the constituents of emotion: appraisal of the eliciting situation, physiological changes, facial expressions, action tendencies, and subjective feelings, whose synchronization among individuals is capable of giving rise to a more or less intense shared affective experience among them. Moreover, I suggest that we restrict shared emotions proper to those emotions that people experience together in contexts in which individuals can be mutually aware of sharing the same emotion. Traditionally, this kind of awareness has required the actual physical co-presence of individuals, but technological advances have created new forms of co-presence through phone and video conferencing or, less directly, through such internet based social network services as Facebook and Twitter. Of course, people can also experience emotions on the basis of concerns that they share with other individuals when they are not in contact with

others who, sharing the same concerns, feel alike. These emotions may have the same intentional structure as shared emotions proper, but they lack the dimension of shared affectivity that constitutes the other main aspect of shared emotions in my account. These group-based emotions can more or less reliably predict people's shared emotions in actual social contexts but I would not characterize them as shared emotions proper.

Beginning with shared emotions of the weakest type, I suggest that these emotions emerge when individuals with overlapping private concerns appraise the emotion-eliciting situation similarly from their personal points of view, and the mechanisms of attentional deployment, emotional contagion, facial mimicry, and behavioral entrainment synchronize the individuals' emotional responses, producing a shared affective experience, either phenomenologically fused or aggregative, among the co-present individuals who are mutually aware that others are feeling the same. For instance, panic in the stock market is an intense weakly shared fear that each shareholder feels for his or her own well-being. Since the concern for one's own well-being is biologically hard-wired, the emotion transmits easily among individuals. Even if it is widely agreed that the causal processes that contribute to the synchronization of emotional responses in groups are non-conscious and automatic, recent evidence suggests that these processes are nevertheless sensitive to social context. Thus, Bourgois and Hess (2008) found mimicry of happiness even between strangers, whereas anger and sadness were mimicked only between ingroup members. Other emotions that may be synchronized only within an ingroup might include pride, shame, and guilt. This is an important finding because it suggests that we do not share all emotions with strangers, in spite of our overlapping private concerns with them.

I suggest that shared emotions of the next strongest type, moderately shared emotions are responses to reasons that emerge from people's private commitment to a concern that is shared with other individuals who have similarly committed themselves to the same concern. The subjects evaluate the emotion-eliciting events similarly from the perspective of their shared

concern, which is constitutive of a group or social category in terms of which the individuals identify themselves, and the emotion is felt as a group member, but in a weak sense, because the group membership is self-appointed. The mechanisms of attentional deployment, emotional contagion, facial mimicry, and behavioral entrainment synchronize individuals' emotional responses, producing a more or less intense shared affective experience, either phenomenologically fused or aggregative, with mutual awareness that other group members are feeling the same. Shared group membership, when salient to group members, reinforces the synchronization processes, adding to the intensity of the shared affective experience. An example of a moderately shared emotion is the joy of random fans over a goal scored by their favorite team.

Finally, I propose that shared emotions of the strongest, we-mode type are responsive to group reasons that emerge from individuals' collective commitment to a concern as a group. Team members' joy about winning national championship in their sports is an example of a strongly shared emotion. The members appraise the emotion-eliciting event from the group's point of view in relation to their collective concern, and the mechanisms of attentional deployment, emotional contagion, facial mimicry, and behavioral entrainment synchronize the group members' emotional responses producing a strong rather than a weak shared affective experience, either phenomenologically fused or aggregative, with mutual awareness that the other group members are feeling the same. The strong collectivity of an emotion is also reflected in its evaluative content. Thus, team members do not rejoice merely in winning the championship but instead in "*our* winning the championship" or in "*our* accomplishment." These pronominal qualifiers of the emotional content make metaphorical sense in the context of moderately shared emotions, but here they can be taken literally. Also, the emotion is felt as a group member in a strong, collectively committed sense; not only by personal association. In this way, collective *content* and *mode* are built into shared emotions of the strongest kind.<sup>13</sup>

## Concluding remarks

I began by asking whether or not we can provide a plausible account of “straightforwardly shared” emotions without compromising our intuitions about the individualism of emotions, and if not, whether “straightforward sharing” is necessary for collectively intentional emotions. In spite of their differences, both Gilbert and Schmid think that sharing of this kind is necessary for collectively intentional emotions and that we need a collective subject for shared emotions; the difference lies at the level on which this subject is located. Gilbert’s plural subject is constituted through individuals’ joint commitment to feeling as a body, whereas Schmid’s collective subject emerges as a phenomenological frame in which individuals interpret their feelings. I have argued against Gilbert that we cannot constitute a plural subject of emotion by jointly committing ourselves to feeling an emotion because such commitment amounts to the creation of a feeling rule, not to a genuine emotion. Against Schmid, I have suggested that a phenomenological collective subject is a contingent rather than a necessary condition of shared emotions. My proposal is then weaker than the previous ones because no shared emotion in my typology requires a collective subject. I believe that this is an advantage for the proposed account, however, because it renders the view consistent with the individualism of emotions. We can even accept epistemological individualism according to which individuals feel only their own emotions, provided that we qualify this principle by stating that people’s *own* emotions can be either private or shared, in some contexts even in a strong, we-mode sense.

My typology is analogous to Gilbert’s trichotomy of collective feelings. Indeed, my weakly shared emotions correspond to Gilbert’s first type of collective feelings that individuals feel about their personal actions. I only add that shared emotions of this kind also involve a

synchronization of co-present individuals' emotional responses. Otherwise it would be difficult to see why these emotions are collective in the first place. My moderately and strongly shared emotions have similarities to membership feelings in Gilbert's theory as well as to group-based emotions in social psychology. However, both accounts fail to distinguish between qualitatively dissimilar kinds of group membership or identification with the group. The distinction between weakly, moderately, and strongly collective concerns also amends Schmid's account of shared concerns. Whether even the strongly shared emotions are "straightforwardly shared" enough, I do not know. However, I believe that those as well as other types of shared emotions capture important phenomena in our emotional lives as social beings.<sup>14</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Schmid's argument about affective individualism is actually cast in terms of feelings rather than emotions. However, the terminological difference is not relevant, because Schmid understands emotions as intentional feelings.

<sup>2</sup> The main adherents of the phenomenological or perceptual approach include Peter Goldie (2000), Christine Tappolet (2000), Bennett Helm (2001), Robert Roberts (2003), and Sabine Döring (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert presents an analogous account of collective remorse in Gilbert (2000).

<sup>4</sup> The concept of feeling rule was introduced by the sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983) who argued that feeling rules govern emotional exchanges in all domains of social life, both private and public. They set criteria for the proper duration, strength, time and placement of emotions in particular social situations and roles, such as between spouses, best friends, parents and children, superiors and subordinates, or customers and salespersons. Hochschild was mainly concerned with the negative consequences of emotion management in accordance with commercially motivated feeling rules in service professions. However, there are other social groups in private or even public life whose feeling rules are more freely negotiable between the group members. Here a joint commitment to feel may function as a way of creating group-social feeling rules for the group members.

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert has admitted in a private discussion that this is a valid criticism of her view in so far as feeling rules are understood in a context- and situation-specific sense, not as constituents of certain social roles.

<sup>6</sup> Goldie's theory of emotions is actually more cognitivist than Schmid presents, for Goldie (2000) characterizes feelings toward in cognitive terms as "thinking with feeling" and renders emotions as complex episodes that typically include perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of various kinds.

<sup>7</sup> Anita Konzelmann Ziv presented a similar argument against phenomenologically collective we-feelings in her presentation "We-mode Feeling – Between Experience and Attribution" at Collective Intentionality VII conference in Basel, Aug 23-26, 2010. She suggested that experiential I-mode and we-mode awareness "regulate a feeling's momentary closure of subjecthood in the way a zoom lens regulates the momentary closure of a perspective... [as] a function of the situational parameters".

<sup>8</sup> Roberts who renders emotions as "concern-based construals" does not talk about emotional appraisals himself.

<sup>9</sup> In a nutshell, Tuomela's (2007) three necessary and jointly sufficient criteria for we-mode collectivity are the presence of an authoritative group reason, (the satisfaction of) a collectivity condition, and group-based collective commitment.

<sup>10</sup> I am grateful to Maj and Raimo Tuomela for their constructive comments that helped me to clarify my discussion on strongly shared concerns without explicit collective acceptance.

<sup>11</sup> Collins applies the notions of "mood", "emotion", and "feeling" as coextensive. Here is a striking example: "Members share a common *mood*. It is unessential what *emotion* is present at the outset. The *feelings* may be anger, friendliness, enthusiasm, fear, sorrow, or many others" (Collins 2004, 107-8; my italics). Philosophically, this is confusing because it is widely agreed that feelings, emotions, and moods are affective states of subtly different kind and therefore cannot be readily equated (see e.g. Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 78-92).

<sup>12</sup> I am grateful for Christian von Scheve for pointing out this difference between Durkheim's and Collins' accounts of collective emotions.

<sup>13</sup> I believe that shared emotions of different types have importantly dissimilar functions in social dynamics. For instance, I suggest that strongly and moderately shared emotions reinforce more robust affective solidarity between the participants of emotion than weakly shared emotions. Moreover, I hypothesize that strongly shared emotions are capable of motivating more reliable and resilient action in support of the group members' shared concerns than moderately and, especially, weakly shared emotions. Indeed, shared emotions of the weakest kind, such as panic in the stock market, may inflict detrimental consequences to everybody who shares the emotion. On the other hand, even weakly shared emotions can sometimes awaken people's awareness of their convergent concerns, thus contributing to the transformation of their group from I-mode to we-mode. However, I must postpone a detailed discussion on the functions of different kinds of shared emotions to another article.

<sup>14</sup> My thanks are due to the anonymous referees of earlier versions of this paper. Their insightful comments helped me to improve the article in many significant respects. Any remaining shortcomings are of course solely my responsibility.



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