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## Recensioni

**Otávio Bueno, George Darby, Steven French and Dean Rickles (eds.), *Thinking about Science, Reflecting on Art*, Abingdon (UK) and New York (NY), Routledge 2018, pp. 192, ISBN 978-1-138-68732-5.**

This collected volume discusses relationships between topics in philosophy of science, on the one hand, and aesthetics and philosophy of art, on the other hand.

In the first essay, Julia Sánchez-Dorado argues for the benefits of bringing those disciplines together, considering Bas C. van Fraassen's (Van Fraassen [2008]) discussion of the analogies between the practice of perspectival drawing and the practice of representing the world through scientific representations and Catherine Elgin's view that both scientific and artistic representation have cognitive value (illustrated in the essay by Elgin collected in the volume). At the same time, Sánchez-Dorado shows some methodological difficulties raised by other philosophical attempts at building bridges between science and art, discussing cases in which artworks are used to illustrate features of scientific representations, art theoretical concepts are used to argue about representation in science, and links between representation in art and science are established.

Catherine Elgin's key thesis is that «art, like science, embodies, conveys, and often constitutes understanding» (Elgin [1983]: 27) in particular because «epistemically rewarding works of art reorient us, enabling us to see things differently from the ways we saw them before» (Elgin [1983]: 28). In a nutshell, she argues that experiments, thought experiments, scientific models, caricatures and works of fiction all employ the mechanism of exemplification, which consists in both instantiating and referring to certain properties. In particular, they «contrive artificial situations to exemplify features that otherwise are likely to be epistemically inaccessible or overlooked» (Elgin [1983]: 38).

Roman Frigg and James Nguyen develop on the topic of exemplification in art and science, focusing on cases in which objects *non-literally* instantiate certain properties and, nevertheless, exemplify them. They explain non-literal instantiation without appealing to

the vague and problematic notion of “metaphorical instantiation” introduced by Goodman (Goodman [1976]) and Elgin (Elgin [1983]).

Ann-Sophie Barwich’s contribution is concerned with the interpretation of ambiguous elements in scientific models. Just as we cannot infer from the text of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* how many children Lady Macbeth had, «the chemical formulas of Berzelius, for example, give information about proportions but not about mechanical features of atoms, such as their size or shape» (Bueno, Darby, French, Rickles [2018]: 68). Barwich discusses in detail the case of a protein model built through X-ray crystallography, showing that in science, unlike literary fiction, this kind of ambiguities are addressed by integrating one scientific model with other methods.

Otávio Bueno argues that «in many instances involving visual evidence in the sciences, the particular form of imagination that is required is precisely the one that is in place in order to make sense of key aspects of one’s experience in the arts» (Bueno, Darby, French, Rickles [2018]: 80). He draws a parallel between imagining fictional characters based on the perceptual content given by a film and imagining seeing an acid based on the perceptual content given by images of a cell generated by an electron microscope, with reference to the experiments conducted by George Palade in the 1950s.

George Darby, Martin Pickup and Jon Robson return to the topic of indeterminacy in fiction and science, examining what they call “deep indeterminacy” in both metaphysics and fiction. Deep indeterminacy arises not as a consequence of the vagueness of our representations of the world (as when e.g. *Macbeth* doesn’t tell us how many children Lady Macbeth had), but as a consequence of the fact that the world itself is indeterminate – as implied by quantum mechanics, according to the authors of the essay (Bueno, Darby, French, Rickles [2018]: 106-108), as well as by works of fiction such as Henry James’ *The Turn of The Screw*, where it is not clear whether the author is telling a ghost story or a story about a troubled soul and thus the indeterminacy «is not merely a matter of

what the storyteller neglects to specify but, rather, it is essential to the nature and value of the work that no such specification is provided» (Bueno, Darby, French, Rickles [2018]: 108). Darby, Pickup and Robson propose to model deep indeterminacy in both quantum mechanics and fiction by using the notion of *situations* (understood as *parts* of possible worlds).

Dean Rickles concentrates on the tension between accounts of music qua objective structure and accounts of music qua objective experience and submits that Arthur Eddington’s (Eddington [1921]; [1936]) “selective subjectivism” – a view developed in the realm of philosophy of science – can successfully deal with such tension.

Alix Cohen puts forward an original interpretation of Kant’s views on beauty and cognition. Criticizing alternative readings, she claims that, according to Kant, cognition can be beautiful and in particular that in §5 of KU Kant implicitly suggests that «the same representation can be related to the subject in a number of ways, and which way obtains is defined by the determining ground of the judgement that ensues: it is a cognitive judgement if it is grounded on a concept, and it is an aesthetic judgement if it is grounded on a feeling of disinterested pleasure. Hence, even when we are judging a representation that is fully conceptualized and determined (“rational”), as long as our judgement is based on disinterested pleasure, it is a judgement of taste» (Bueno, Darby, French, Rickles [2018]: 142). Finally, Cohen argues that, within the Kantian framework, aesthetic feelings are not irrelevant or even detrimental to cognition, but instead always boost cognition: «experiencing a particular cognition as beautiful is good for my cognition of it. This is due to the fact that there is an intrinsic connection between the feeling of beauty and the efficiency of my cognitive activity. The experience of a cognition as beautiful stimulates the activity of the imagination and understanding, and thus stimulates our cognitive activity as it occurs» (Bueno, Darby, French, Rickles [2018]: 149). Cohen stresses that the link is merely between beauty and the state of the cognitive faculties, and not between beauty and epis-

temic credence or beauty and truth (in this, her proposal differs from Breitenbach [2013]).

Adam Toon explores “mental factionalism” – the view (inspired by Kendall Walton’s views on fiction, among others) that it is *useful* to talk about psychological states as if they existed, even if it might be the case that they don’t exist (as eliminativists like Paul Churchland have argued). According to Toon, folk psychological states talk is useful because it allows to «capture complex interactions between our brains, bodies and external devices – some linguistic, others not» (Bueno, Darby, French, Rickles [2018]: 164).

In the last essay, Steven French considers the pros and cons of applying Amie Thomasson’s ontological view of artworks as created abstract artifacts to the ontology of scientific theories, describing analogies and disanalogies between artworks and models. In his concluding remarks, he suggests that eliminativism about both artworks and scientific theories might be a view worthy of investigation.

This is a remarkable collection providing insights on methodological links between philosophy of science and of art, on the cognitive goals of both science and art, on the role of fiction in both fields of research, on how research in philosophy of science can illuminate issues in philosophy of art and aesthetics and vice-versa, and on the ontology of artworks and scientific theories. It is a wide variety of topics, each worthy of a monograph or a specific collection of essays. For instance, the questions raised by Bueno about the role of imagination for scrutinizing visual scientific evidence deserve to be discussed within the larger debate on perceptual imagination (including e.g. works by Fabian Dorsch and Bence Nanay), Cohen’s interpretation of Kant intersects with e.g. work by Breitenbach (e.g. Breitenbach [2018]), Costello (Costello, [2007]) and Schellekens (Schellekens [2007]), and French’s ontological investigation would benefit from dialogue with e.g. David Davies (e.g. 2017) and Julian Dodd (e.g. Dodd [2013]). I hope more collaborative work between philosophers of science and aestheticians will be conducted in the future.

Contents: Notes on Contributors – Introduction – Methodological lessons for the integration of philosophy of science and aesthetics: The case of representation (Julia Sánchez-Dorado) – Nature’s handmaid, art (Catherine Z. Elgin) – Of barrels and pipes: Representation-as in art and science (Roman Frigg and James Nguyen) – Is Captain Kirk a natural blonde? Do X-ray crystallographers dream of electron clouds? Comparing model-based inferences in science with fiction (Ann-Sophie Barwich) – Interpreting the sciences, interpreting the arts (Otávio Bueno) – Deep indeterminacy in physics and fiction (George Darby, Martin Pickup and Jon Robson) – Some philosophical problems of music theory (and some music-theoretic problem of philosophy) (Dean Rickles) – Kant on beauty and cognition (Alix Cohen) – Epistemology as fiction (Adam Toon) – Art, science and abstract artefacts (Steven French).

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[by Elisa Caldarola]

**Susan Lanzoni, *Empathy: A History*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2018, pp. 392, ISBN: 9780300222685.**

Issued in 2018, Susan Lanzoni's book *Empathy: A History* has, quite rightly, drawn the attention of the ever-growing number of academics working on the cross-disciplinary concept of empathy who were eager to finally have available, in English, a significant historical study on the question. In her nearly 400-page volume, the author analyzes the evolution of scientific ideas and practices about empathy, as well as its social and political representations, over a time span that runs from the late 19th century to the present. She shows how, from the pioneering aesthetic and psychological investigations that were carried out before WWI, empathology developed and diversified in the interwar period by spreading to other domains such as psychiatry, psychotherapy, and sociology and came to pervade, after WWII, the collective psyche and the ideological discourse before becoming, in the last few decades, a major matter of debate in neuroscience. The title does not

indicate that the book is almost entirely devoted to the fate of empathy within the American context, although Lanzoni insists, in the first chapter, on the seminality of German studies on *Einführung* and strives, in the last chapter, to place current debates on empathy within the framework of international research. The author chooses to treat empathy as a multifaceted historical object that deserves to be considered in its scientific as well as in its extra-scientific aspects, so that her study has more to do with the history of ideas than with the history of science. Lanzoni's approach, which basically consists of discussing, over various time periods, the significance of a psychological concept in a variety of intellectual, cultural, and social contexts, is clearly in keeping with the currently prevailing methodology in the history of knowledge. It is worth noting that the author tends to move, over the chapters, from conceptual history to social and cultural history. This methodological shift directly echoes the gradual change of status undergone, according to Lanzoni, by the issue of empathy during the 20th century.

The developments proposed in the second chapter in regard to the question of how, in the early 20th century, *Einführung* terminologically and conceptually became "empathy" within the English-speaking context, are undoubtedly the greatest achievement of the whole book. Here Lanzoni succeeds in clarifying the origins of the term "empathy" and its uses by carrying out a philological inquiry that nobody had seriously undertaken before her (see also: Lanzoni [2017]). Against the prevailing historiographical dogma, she demonstrates that the expression appeared, not in 1909, but as early as 1908, and that it was proposed, not by Edward B. Titchener alone, but simultaneously by Titchener and James Ward. As she points out, the emergence and recognition of the term should be placed within the broader framework of the contemporary British/American debate about the most adequate way of rendering *Einführung* in English. As she nicely shows, "empathy" was only one of several terminological possibilities that were proposed during that period. Interestingly, Lanzoni also insists on the semantic

dimension of this terminological debate by highlighting that the various scholars who took part in it each had their own way of defining the corresponding concept. By doing so, she sketches out the conditions underlying the acculturation of the research tradition on *Einfühlung* within the English-speaking context. Regarding the spreading of the term, she shows that, after a period of uncertainty between 1908 and 1913, “empathy” came to be commonly used in the specialized literature, although the expression was subject to severe criticisms until the late 1920s.

Lanzoni’s depiction of the landscape of empathological research in the interwar period constitutes a further significant contribution to the history of empathy. Here, too, by showing that, far from being on the wane, empathy studies flourished during this time span, she convincingly challenges the prevailing historiography. As she demonstrates in chapters three, four, five, and six, not only did empathy continue to foil aesthetics and art theory until WWII, but it became, in the 1920-1940s, a major focus of interest for American psychiatry, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and sociology. According to the author, while remaining a subject of theoretical concerns, it established itself as a core concept of a number of applied disciplines and social/therapeutic practices. Reading her book, one is also surprised to learn that, as a theorist of *Einfühlung*, Lipps remained a major source of inspiration for American aestheticians, psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and sociologists until WWII and beyond. Here, too, by significantly revising the Lipps scholarship, the author helps shed new light on the history of empathy. Finally, Lanzoni should be praised for having systematically addressed, for the first time, the question of how the term “empathy” and the empathological discourse were popularized outside intellectual and specialized circles. Here we are dealing with an issue that runs all the way through the book, but that is specifically discussed in chapter seven («Popular Empathy») in which the author analyzes the growing interest in empathy in American society of the post-war years. She demonstrates how, during that period, «empathy became», in the media,

as well as in counseling, cinema, theater, literature, etc., «the term of choice for an emotional and reasoned understanding of others» (Lanzoni [2018]: 213) and how deeply and enduringly it became rooted in the collective psyche.

Despite these remarkably innovative achievements, *Empathy: A History* is far from being above criticism, and some developments, especially those expounded in the first and in the last chapters, prove to be highly questionable.

The first chapter, which is supposed to explore the origins of the concept of empathy in the 19th and early 20th centuries, far from fulfills its objectives. Not only is the historical survey proposed by Lanzoni incomplete and inaccurate, but it also provides a distorted view of the beginnings of empathology. Here she misses two essential points: (a) the term *Einfühlung*, while having emerged within the framework of the German psychoaesthetic tradition, was not exclusive to aesthetics and art theory, but was also in common use, in the early 20th century, among psychologists, philosophers, sociologists, etc.; (b) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many scholars worked on empathy-related issues without using the term “*Einfühlung*”, and the fact is that empathological studies emerged before the expression was coined and popularized (Romand [2015]). In addition to wondering about the variety of meanings and uses of “*Einfühlung*”, she should have considered the genealogy of the concept independently from the history of the term. Although the history of empathy can be contemplated in the very long term (Pinotti [2011]), the birth of modern empathology has to do with the rise, from the mid-19th century onward, of cross-disciplinary concerns about *social cognition* in the wake of the emergence of affective psychology (Romand [2015]). It is only by revisiting this research program, which developed mostly in German-speaking countries at the intersection of psychology, anthropology, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, that one can hope to correctly address the issue of the origins of empathy studies. Here Lanzoni, who exclusively focuses on the psychoaesthetic tradition of *Einfühlung* and who favors English-speaking

scholars to the detriment of German-speaking scholars, clearly misses the point. Another flaw of the first chapter lies in the author's misconception of aesthetic empathy. What Lanzoni refers to as "aesthetic empathy" corresponds in reality to what Lipps called "aesthetic mechanics" (*ästhetische Mechanik*), that is, the view that one's aesthetic appraisal of spatial forms results from one's capacity to "interpret" them by feeling, acting, striving, moving, etc. in them. Although the issue of aesthetic mechanics was an important aspect of the theory of aesthetic empathy and proved to be instrumental in its emergence in the late 19th century, it can in no way be identified with *Einfühlungsästhetik*, as it established itself at the turning point of the 20th century. In its "canonical" acceptance, "*ästhetische Einfühlung*" refers to a universal and ubiquitous psychological power that, far from being restricted to space aesthetics, is involved in all aspects and all forms of aesthetic experience (Romand [2020]). Lanzoni's first chapter is also open to criticism because she deals only superficially with Theodor Lipps, the great theorist of *Einfühlung*, who contributed, in the early 20th century, to making famous both the term and the concept. Not only does she devote surprisingly little space to the Lippsian theory of empathy, but she also gives the impression of having only second-hand knowledge of the author and his *oeuvre*. Among other things, she seems to ignore that Lipps's *Einfühlung* is an umbrella term that does not refer simply to the fact of "putting oneself into someone's shoes", but also to a variety of functions such as the perception of animacy, the expression of emotions, the sense of agency, and the perception of causality and physical forces (Romand [2020]), and that the corresponding concept, far from being restricted to his aesthetics and psychology, is also found in his ethics, epistemology, philosophy of science, theory of language, and metaphysics (Fabbianelli [2018]). Moreover, Lanzoni does not discuss Lipps per se, but simply *en passant* through her developments on the British writer and amateur aesthete Vernon Lee, to whom most of the first chapter is devoted. Her propensity to grossly underevaluate Lipps's contri-

bution while overemphasizing that of Lee and other second-rank scholars constitutes, in my view, a major methodological flaw.

Devoted to the fate of empathology in current neuroscience, the last chapter proves to be largely unconvincing as well. Lanzoni fails to correctly place the concept of empathy within the scientific and philosophical context of social cognition studies and to discuss it in light of cognate notions such as theory of mind, sense of agency, perception of animacy, etc. Against all expectations, she addresses neither the question of the polysemousness of the term "empathy", nor that of the variety of the expressions used by current scholars to refer to empathy-related issues. Another serious flaw of the last chapter is that the author almost totally disregards the issue of the revived interest in empathy in aesthetics, a crucial event of modern empathology to which the author devotes only a few lines (Lanzoni [2018]: 264-265) and that should have deserved much greater emphasis. Apparently, Lanzoni is unaware of the fact that current empathy-related studies, as they established themselves in the last decades of the 20th century, correspond, to a large extent, to the resurgence of the cross-disciplinary empathological paradigm that developed mostly in Germany between the mid-19th century and WWI. If she had correctly analyzed both the origins of empathology and its most recent developments, she could have easily highlighted that modern research on empathy and, more broadly speaking, social cognition, nicely fits with Lipps's overarching concept of *Einfühlung*.

More general criticisms can be addressed relative to the content and the organization of the book. For instance, the author demonstrates, throughout her book, a strong US-centered tropism that leads her to almost totally overlook other research traditions on empathy, especially the German-speaking tradition, which was, however, hegemonic until at least WWI. Moreover, one is forced to admit that, as a psychological concept, empathy is not satisfyingly placed in its intellectual context, the author, in addition to being often too descriptive, preferring to study-

ing empathology in light of its broader socio-cultural environment. Finally, it is regrettable that Lanzoni remains completely silent on the fruitful philosophical empathological tradition, which dates back to the second half of the 19th century. Besides Lipps's contribution, she might have highlighted the importance of empathy and related concepts in immanentist positivism (Mach, Avenarius, Gomperz), the phenomenological movement (Husserl, Scheler, Stein), and, more recently, in Quine, while saying a word about current philosophers of empathy such as Dan Zahavi. Such an oversight is all the less excusable because there exists a rich secondary literature on the topic (e.g. Zahavi [2009]; Russo Krauss [2013]; Baghrmian [2016]; Depraz [2017]; Fabbianelli [2018]).

Table of contents: Preface; Acknowledgments; Introduction; Part I: Empathy as the Art of Movement; 1. The Roots of *Einfühlung* or Empathy in the Arts; 2. From *Einfühlung* to Empathy; 3. Empathy in Art and Modern Dance; Part II: Making Empathy Scientific; 4. The Limits of Empathy in Schizophrenia; 5. Empathy in Social Work and Psychotherapy; 6. Measuring Empathy; Part III: Empathy in Culture and Politics; 7. Popular Empathy; 8. Empathy, Race, and Politics; 9. Empathic Brains; Conclusion; Notes; Index.

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[by David Romand]

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