

ULYSSES SYNDROME

The Problem of Collective Intentionality for Newcomers

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Abstract: In this paper I will discuss the process of assimilation in a new culture and the reasons why this assimilation is not always successful. As an example of unsuccessful integration, I will describe the Ulysses Syndrome a chronic illness that is affecting a growing number of newcomers. In the case of Ulysses Syndrome, the last stage of integration, which is supposed to be of contentment, is, in fact, often accompanied by chronic problems that impact the newcomers' well-being from a physical and psychological point of view. I believe that reflecting on collective intentionality, especially in its pre-reflective singular and collective layers can shed light on the reasons why physical distress arises.

Keywords: Collective intentionality, Well-Being, Newcomers, Assimilation, Chronic Illness

I am from there. I am from here.
I am not there and I am not here.
I have two names, which meet and part,
and I have two languages.
I forget which of them I dream in.

Mahmoud Darwish

1. Introduction

In this paper I am going to discuss the problem of Ulysses Syndrome¹ in relation to collective intentionality. Ulysses Syndrome is a chronic illness affecting a growing number of newcomers. This syndrome influences the newcomer, in particular during the last stage of assimilation, which is supposed to be of contentment, with chronic physical and psychological problems.

¹ Joseba ACHOTEGUI, *The Ulysses Syndrome: The immigrant Syndrome with Chronic and Multiple Stress*. NED, Madrid 2020.

I believe that reflecting on collective intentionality,² especially in its pre-reflective shared and collective layers³ can shed light on the reasons that are the basis of the psychological and physical distress characterizing the Ulysses' Syndrome. In the case of this syndrome, the expressive forms in which the newcomers recognize and express themselves seem to adhere to empty collective representations that even though match those of the hosting culture do not fulfill the meanings craved by the new receiving culture.

For this reason, the paper will examine first the meaning of this syndrome and the way in which the migratory process disrupts the habitual thinking process that builds the normative cultural patterns orienting one's action. It will, then, show how the pre-reflective layer is constituted and how important this constitution is for the expression of personal feelings. I will use the example of grievance to describe how disruptive the incongruence between pre-reflective and collective emotions can be. At the end of the paper, I will propose to introduce a distinction between collective and shared emotions in order to foster newcomers' ability to transition from pre-reflective to reflective layer in a way that is congruent to their own emotions.

2. Ulysses' Journey

When Ulysses left home, little he knew that his home would have been lost forever. After twenty years of travelling, finally he landed on his own Ithaca but failed to recognize it, so mournfully he cried: «Alas! and now where on earth am I? What do I hear myself?». «He believes himself to be in a strange country, a stranger among strangers.»⁴ Homer's psychology of nostoi (the home-coming journey) sheds light on the complexity of a long journey back home and the longing for a home that seems to have ceased to exist.⁵ Unfortunately, we do not know how Ulysses felt after a few

² John R. SEARLE, *Collective Intentions and Actions*, in P. Cohen, J. Morgan and M. E. Pollack (eds.), *Intentions in Communication*, Bradford Books, MIT press, Cambridge 1990; John R. SEARLE, *The Construction of Social Reality*, Free Press, New York 1995.

³ Alessandro SALICE, Kengo MIYAZONO, *Being one of us*, "Philosophical Psychology", 33, 2020, 42-63; Dan ZAHAVI, *You, Me, and We: The Sharing of Emotional Experience*, "Journal of Consciousness Studies", 22, 2015, 84-101; Dan ZAHAVI, *Collective Intentionality and Plural Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness*, "Journal of Social Philosophy", 49, 2018, 61-65.

⁴ *Ivi*, p. 106

⁵ Home is a very difficult concept to describe. «Home is where one starts from» (Thomas S. ELIOT, *Four Quartets*, Harcourt, Brace & Co, New York 1943, p. 17). «The home is the place to which a person intends to return when they are away from it» (Joseph H. BEALE, *A Treatise on the Conflict of Laws*, vol. I, Baker, Voorhis & Co, New York 1935, p. 126). «The home is the starting-point as well as the terminus. It is the null-point of the system of coordinates which we ascribe to the world in order to

months of his coming back home. Did he truly feel at home? Or, did he ever fancy to come back to Scylla? We know that only Argo, his dog, recognized him and everything around felt different even if still the same. The notion of home for a person who is forced to leave it is extremely complex. Once left, it is almost impossible to return. Even if everything remains the same, that place has changed in the memories of the person who left and in the people who have changed throughout the time of absence. Without knowing it, the home, the physical place in which one felt at ease has transformed into an emotional token.

«It is the same problem which Heraclitus visualized with his statement that we cannot bathe twice in the same river; which Bergson analyzed in his philosophy of the *durée*; which Kierkegaard described as the problem of “repetition”: which Peguy had in mind in saying that the road which leads from Paris to Chartres has a different aspect from the road which leads from Chartres to Paris; and it is the same problem which, in a some- what distorted fashion, occupies G. H. Mead's *Philosophy of the Present* (1932).⁶ The mere fact that we grow older, that novel experiences emerge continuously within our stream of thought, that previous experiences are permanently receiving additional interpretative meanings in the light of these supervenient experiences, which have, more or less, changed our state of mind – all these basic features of our mental life bar a recurrence of the same».⁷

As Schutz beautifully summarized in the lines cited above, the newcomer loses the home in the same way as we, at each moment, lose our present; the discriminant factor is the lack of awareness. Being home a physical immutable place, it is easier to get tricked into the idea of its immutability.

2.1. The Process of Assimilation

In his study,⁸ Gordon simplifies the steps to assimilation in the new country according to three main steps: acculturation (in which the newcomer is shocked by the entrance in the new culture and tries to apprehend as much as possible), integration (in

find our bearings in it. Geographically “home” means a certain spot on the surface of the earth. Where I happen to be is my “abode”; where I intend to stay is my “residence”; where I come from and whither I want to return is my “home”. Yet home is not merely the homestead – my house, my room, my garden, my town – but everything it stands for» (Alfred SCHUTZ, *The Homecomer*, “American Journal of Sociology”, 50, 5, 1945, p. 119).

⁶ George H. MEAD, *The Philosophy of the Present*, Prometheus Books, Amherst 1932.

⁷ *Ivi*, p. 115

⁸ Milton Myron GORDON, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*, Oxford University Press, New York 1964.

which the newcomer enters different levels of the society), and cultural intermarriage (in which the newcomer mingles with from a very personal and emotional point of view with the hosting culture). I believe that Ulysses' syndrome locates itself at the very last step of this journey – the emotional assimilation. According to Gordon, when a person leaves its home for a radical change the transition is characterized by a standard process of cultural, structural, and marital assimilation.

Gordon believes that this process of cultural assimilation is inevitable and differences would tend to disappear⁹ into a form of civic assimilation where conflict of values and power fades into harmonic co-living. Often, nowadays experience tells us otherwise.¹⁰ Even when living for years in the new country some newcomers might feel as if they no longer have a place where to feel at home. The home left behind has changed or they have changed; the structures provided to them from the new home might have failed them in the moments of acute distress and made space for unresolved negative feelings. These feelings affect their health and lead to what Achotegui called the Ulysses Syndrome.¹¹ In what follows I will examine Ulysses Syndrome and propose to work on collective intentionality, especially in what concerns the field of shared emotions and their habitualizations within shared values and institutions, to help those affected to recover from this syndrome. Before discussing my argument, I will explain what we mean by Ulysses Syndrome.

3. Ulysses Syndrome

This term was coined in 2002 by the psychiatrist Joseba Achotegui during a time in which Spain was witnessing a strong wave of immigration.¹² His geographical location allowed him to observe a recurrent pattern in the suffering of the newcomers and to study the bodily as well as emotional similarities among those cases. He called Ulysses Syndrome the recurrence of health problems, such as chronic fatigue, migraines, nausea, shortness of breath, gastric and osteo-physical pains, which seemed to be often triggered by the emotional turmoil of not feeling oneself at home. The sense of exclusion which often generates a deep sense of vulnerability, constant sadness or a

⁹ *Ivi*, 66

¹⁰ Richard ALBA, Victor NEE, *Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration*, “International Migration Review”, 31, 4, 1997, 826–874; Richard ALBA, Victor NEE, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2003; Ruben G. RUMBAUT, *Assimilation and Its Discontents: Between Rhetoric and Reality*, “The International Migration Review”, 31, 4, 1997, 923–960.

¹¹ *Ibidem*

¹² *Ibidem*

sense of isolation, leads to low self-esteem and a sense of stagnation. Moreover, the multiplicity and chronicity of these factors is increased by the lack of a healthy network of social support and the inappropriate intervention of the medical system in the host country. Today, Indigenous Linguistically and Culturally Competent Community Health Educators, (ILCCCHEs) and Community Health Workers (CHW) are working in close collaboration with WHO to address this problem through prevention and education.

3.1. A Case of Ulysses Syndrome

What does it mean to be healthy? The answer varies according to the place where to be healthy and the several ways of approaching medicine; even within the same medical tradition, the strain of antibiotics one might use, for example, in England is different from the one administered in Switzerland. Yet, the body of a person travelling from one place to the other is expected to adjust to the new environment without particular thought invested in thinking what it means, personally, to feel good and how to achieve this feeling. If and when this adjustment fails, it is the person who fails and is often up to its responsibility to find a way to re-adjust in order to feel healthy again. The red flag of any given adjustment problem has to be ironed out for normality to be achieved again.

In Bali, for example, ethnomedicine is applied in the form of a daily practice of offerings to the ancestors and protective spirits; these offerings are conceived as a way of maintaining a balanced relationship with the whole environment, including the unseen forces. Probably, a person who wants to fit in the working environment of any European capital, for example, might want to avoid sharing this worldview with anyone because it might be seen as foreign and eccentric. To continue the example above, this same person, feeling uncertain about the congruence between its own roots and the tradition of the hosting culture, would never question what kind of antibiotics she is taking to feel better and what feeling good means in the new country. She just tries, as much as she can, to adjust. Yet, her body would feel the difference and react accordingly without her being able to listen to her own body and interpret its signals because of her strive to adapt. The incongruence between the pre-reflective layer of the lived-experience (what the newcomer unquestioningly experiences in the hosting country) and its intentional meaning constitution (the meanings that each experience has to acquire in order to be acceptable in the new home) often finds the body as a battlefield. It is on our body, in fact, that we first live any incongruence. «Are you sad?

Take this pill, and you will feel good». Yet, in one's own country there might be no pill for feeling sad. There might just be some rest and more time spent with loved ones.

On this precise point, Joseba Achotegui shared insightful descriptions of some of the cases he encountered during his years of practice; here for the sake of my argument I will focus on a case of incongruent grievance. This will help me to prepare the ground for my discussion on collective intentionality and shared emotions in cases of intense suffering.

The case of Eka, a Moluccan woman living in the Netherlands, is emblematic of this. Her father died on her wedding day. Shortly thereafter, she started having experiences that, within the Western biomedical approach, are perceived as olfactory hallucinations. She also became increasingly sad and withdrawn from social contacts. Her brother brought her to a psychiatrist who diagnosed her with depression and borderline psychosis. He proposed that she undergo a combined treatment of “talk therapy” and anti-psychotic drugs. This only served to worsen her condition. Besides the severe side effects of the drugs, her therapist tried to convince her that she had unresolved conflicts, which further exacerbated her sadness. A couple of friends intervened and obtained funds to enable her to travel to her home country of her ancestors, where she had an extensive social network with clear understanding of the need for closure. Shortly thereafter, she recovered. Not only did her physical and mental symptoms disappear, but her overall wellbeing also improved. This outcome was possible thanks to the supportive conditions that were available to her.

This case shows how the problem was connected to the incongruence between what she was feeling and what portion of her feelings the hosting society could see and accept. Adjusting to the new culture was taking away from her those lived experiences that made her who she was. Her grievance was incongruent with the emotions shared by the community immediately around her. In the long run, this resulted in a detachment from reality because the intersubjective reality in which she was living did not make space for her intentions to be expressed and fulfilled. Her way of experiencing grief did not make sense in the new space-time of the hosting community. As Schutz remarks, «the pure we-relation refers merely to the formal structure of social relationships based upon community of space and time».¹³ In her space and time the we-relation of her community was failing her. She could not share her emotions in any collective intentionality. There was no way to share the sense of grief she was feeling for her father neither in a physical (obituary announcement, banquets, religious functions) nor in an emotional way (sharing memories with the people who knew him, seeing in the other

¹³ *Ivi*, p. 11.

her same pain). Paying attention to the structure of this problem can ameliorate the quality of life of the newcomers.

4. Collective Intentionality

As mentioned above, one of the problems underlying Ulysses Syndrome is connected to intentionality and, in particular, the way in which an individual's intention blends into the collective intentions and emotions of the hosting society. Despite the different styles of assimilation, newcomers' adjustment might, ultimately, diverge in two dangerous directions, that are equally high-risk for emotional incongruence: either newcomers align their intentions to the new costumes in so doing repressing their own or they push away the new costumes hence isolating themselves from the new community.¹⁴ In what follows I will show the importance of the distinction between shared and collective emotions, especially in what pertains to the assimilation process of one's own emotions within the collective emotions of the hosting society.

4.1. Intentionality and Emotions

Intentionality is a complex term that can be used as physiological¹⁵ and conceptual¹⁶ guidelines to understand emotions as they impact the constitution of one's values and meanings. The word intentionality comes from the Greek *enteinein*, translated in Latin with *intendere* and in Arabic with *Ma qul* or *Ma na* to express a general 'aiming at' motion. For example, in Plato's *Cratylus* intentionality is that directedness of consciousness toward its object described through the metaphor of an archer drawing a bow to aim an arrow at a target. In Stoics' term intentionality are *ennoemata*, that is referential thoughts that connect the subject to its lived experience. In general intentionality describes to a *paron apon*, a present absence that connects the individual to its world of constituted meanings. Thanks to the impulses from Brentano's and Husserl's studies, the notion of intentionality as 'objectual in-existence'¹⁷ and 'tension toward'¹⁸ was brought back to the attention of a wide variety of disciplines, biology, neurology,

¹⁴ John BERRY, *Human Ecology and Cognitive Style*. Sage/Halsted/Wiley, New York 1976.

¹⁵ Marc JEANNEROD, *Motor Cognition*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006; Alva NOE, *Action in Perception*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2004.

¹⁶ Daniel C. DENNETT, *The Intentional Stance*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1987.

¹⁷ Franz BRENTANO, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt. Von der Klassifikation psychischer Phänomene*, tr. A. Chrudzimski, Ontos Verlag, Frankfurt 2008.

¹⁸ Hua XIX, Robert B. ZAJONC, *Feeling and thinking: preferences need no inferences*, "America Psychologist", 35, 1980, 151-175.

economics, philosophy, politics. Husserl's volumes on intersubjectivity¹⁹ and Stein's study on collective emotions open the dialogue on how individual's intentions and emotions are expressed and recognized in the collective society.²⁰ Searle's 1990 paper *Collective Intentions and Actions* represents the baptism of this notion which elucidates how individuals' intentions and accordingly their lived-experience engage with the lifeworld not only in an individual but also collective way. The collective intention that describes the connecting bridge between individuals and their shared world should not be seen as a summation of individual intentionality and reciprocal attitudes, but as irreducibly collective.²¹ I believe that this irreducibility contains important information to understand and cure Ulysses Syndrome. In fact, the emotions people suffering from this Syndrome tend to disappear in this irreducible compound.

According to Stein's account of communal experiences (*Gemeinschaftserlebnisse*) «the relation between individual and communal experiences is constitution, not summation».²² (In our society, we encounter ourselves and the Other, often in a pre-reflective attitude, and engage with it in a pre-reflective constitution of collective meanings and values. For example, our sense of kindness with helping a stranger to cross the street is pre-reflectively constituted in our collective intention and of course, the way in which we express our intention to help greatly varies according to the normative patterns implied in that collective compound. If it is an old lady crossing the street in a southern town in Italy you want to make sure to use the right pronoun to address her (you plural) and to help by offering your arm instead of touching her arm directly.

¹⁹ Edmund HUSSERL, (*Husserliana*, vol. XIII. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Erster Teil. 1905-1920. (I. Kern ed.). Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands 1973; Edmund HUSSERL, *Husserliana*, vol. XIV. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Zweiter Teil. 1921-28. (I. Kern ed.) Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands 1973; Edmund, HUSSERL, *Husserliana*, vol. XV. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*. (I. Kern ed.) Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands 1973.

²⁰ Edith STEIN, *Zur Problem der Einfühlung*, Waisenhouse, Halle 1917; Edith STEIN, *Beiträge zur Philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften. Zweite Abhandlung: Individuum und Gemeinschaft*, in E. Husserl (ed.), *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung*, 5, Max Niemeyer, Halle 1922, 116-284.

²¹ John R. SEARLE, *Collective Intentions and Actions*, in P. Cohen, J. Morgan and M. E. Pollack (eds.), *Intentions in Communication*, Bradford Books, MIT press, Cambridge 1990; John R. SEARLE, *The Construction of Social Reality*, Free Press, New York 1995, p. 27.

²² STEIN, *Beiträge*, p. 122

4.1.1. The Crisis of the Habitual Thinking as Usual

What Heidegger calls «the habits, customs, and publicness of everydayness»²³ represent the result and the starting point of this co-constituting framework of habitual meanings in which we are pre-reflectively engaged and where we encounter each other in the definition of what is appropriate or inappropriate, legitimate or illegitimate. When one lives for a long time in a place there is a normative pattern of behaviors nurtured by the responses that are repeatedly given to the network of feelings, emotions, and sensations connected to certain areas of lived-experiences. As Schutz rightly remarks, for the newcomer these patterns are disrupted from the very beginning; the newcomer's epistemological and axiological orientation scheme has to be rebuilt.

«The discovery that things in his new surroundings look quite different from what he expected them to be at home is frequently the first shock to the stranger's confidence in the validity of his habitual “thinking as usual”».²⁴

From ordering food at the restaurant to the way of dressing for a party, the effortless little actions that before did not require any activity of meaning constitution become in the new hosting society a reason to shake the newcomer's self-confidence. The validity of the ‘habitual thinking as usual’ is put in crisis from the very beginning and a new pre-reflective layer of collective intention needs to be formed and integrated with the previous one which refers to the different spatio-temporal area of their home. This specific integration is a difficult goal to achieve which is not often enough thematized and understood.

4.2. Pre-reflective Layer and Emotions

Biologist Freeman writes, «All actions are emotional, and at the same time they have their reasons and explanations. This is the nature of intentional behavior».²⁵ What moves the passive pre-reflective synthesis of data to active subjective engagement with the environment is the network of sensations, feelings and emotions. For the newcomers to feel their personal passive layer as congruent with the collective one it takes the stratification, through time, of new passive sensory data that motivate the individual to

²³ Martin HEIDEGGER, *Ontologie: Hermeneutik der Faktizität*. Van Buren, John (trans.) Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1999, p. 103 (hereafter abridged as GA 63).

²⁴ SCHUTZ, *The Homecomer*, p. 99.

²⁵ Walter FREEMAN, *Emotion is essential to all intentional behaviors*, in M. Lewis and I. Granic (eds.), *Emotion, Development, and Self-organization: Dynamic Systems Approaches to Emotional Development*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 210.

act in harmony with the hosting country. A new network of sensations, feelings, and emotions needs to form through time.

Strong intentionalism states that emotions have an axiological (Husserl, 1984) and hedonic²⁶ valence (positive, negative, or neutral²⁷) which is, in a way, a reflective representation of the content of the experience. Literally, emotions (*e-movere*) are motivating (*motus*) movements. Deonna and Teroni²⁸ describe the intentionality of emotions as through and through because emotions are attitudes that we take in relation to objects provided by a cognitive base. «Each emotion consists in a specific felt bodily stance towards objects or situations, which is correct or incorrect as a function of whether or not these objects and situations exemplify the relevant evaluative property» (2012, 89). Intentionality is not determined by a form of directionality that goes from the subject to the object or vice-versa (*concreta* to *abstracta*), because both directions are co-present. Intentionality accompanies the act; it is that with which the act constitutes itself in a particular form of time. As Husserl wrote there is no «ego as a relational center»,²⁹ but there is the «I that lives in the act. [...] The idea of the ego may be specially ready to come to the fore, or rather to be recreated anew, but only when it is really so recreated, and built into our act, do we refer to the object in a manner to which something descriptively ostensible corresponds».³⁰ (Emotional reality results from the ongoing co-presence and co-participation of the correlated subject and its object, noesis and noema, agent and its surrounding. The passivity of our vegetative state holds an important part of our intentionality whose responsibility we rarely claim and whose motivations and contents we rarely question because our subjectivity is not there yet. Nevertheless, this intentionality is equally responsible for the constitution of a pre-reflective layer that surrounds us and generates the sense of harmony we feel with the environment. The primordial and pre-reflective roots of this intentionality are very

²⁶ Giovanna COLOMBETTI, *Appraising Valence*, “Journal of Consciousness Study,” 12, 8-10, 2005, pp. 103-16

²⁷ Although Teroni and Deonna do not seem to consider the neutral valence of emotions (Julien DEONNA, Fabrice TERONI, *The Emotions. A Philosophical Introduction*. Routledge, London 2012), I agree with Edmund, HUSSERL, (*Husserliana*, vol. XIX, *Logische Untersuchungen, Zweiter Teil, Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis* (U. Panzer ed.), Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag 1984, hereafter as *Hua XIX*) in thinking that the adiphoron is a third possible valence.

²⁸ This problem is part of a long-standing debate concerning non-existent objects and the problem of representation. Sparkled by Brentano’s theory this problem invested thinkers such as Twardoski, Marty, Meinong, Frege, Husserl who approached a solution that tried to fill the gap between a definition of non-existent objects as ideals and percepta. If you want to read more of my take on this debate, please see Ferrarello (Susi FERRARELLO, *Husserl’s Ethics and Practical Intentionality*, Bloomsbury, New York 2015).

²⁹ *Hua XIX*, p. 100

³⁰ *Ibidem*

important in the incongruency of collective emotions. «Primordially is a system of impulses»³¹ that in a pre-reflective way constitute the reality of the individual before his ego-center and subjectivity is called into existence.

The newcomer is not aware of the new reality that is going to populate its passive world, yet this reality infiltrates its passive world at each moment, interacting with its motivational structure and emotions. The transition from egoless synthetic processes to egoic meaning-giving (*Sinngebung*) activity is characterized by the affections that sensations exert on the egoic core of the subject. To be effective this transition needs to be authentic, which literally means that what is in transition from the egoless pre-reflective layer to the egoic reflective one has to be the same (from Greek *autos*). When this mobile core, which Husserl calls volitional body,³² adjust too quickly to external egoic meanings and values, higher chances are for the individual to develop emotional incongruence. The newcomer's primal environment, that is, what surrounds this layer of affections and reactions of its primal form of the ego – the sphere of irritability, as Husserl calls it³³ – needs to be synthesized in an authentic way. This represents the lowest level of affections from which the ego emerges and reacts to the irritating affecting matter by deciding what position it is going to take.³⁴ This is an important node of emotional congruence to produce authentic meaning and values in which the newcomer can recognize itself.

4.2.1. Summation and not Constitution

In the case of Ulysses Syndrome, the problem is that what is collectively constituted is summatively assembled and not co-constituted. In the newcomer's life, the pre-reflective emotional and affective layer combines, by nature, with others' in a summative and not constitutive way because of the crisis of habitual thinking we mentioned above. In fact, the newcomer's subjective ego is not there yet, or so to speak, is not awake to this pre-reflective layer. Since it is busy re-constituting the meaning and values of the smallest, yet necessary, lived-experiences to survive and adjust, its ego cannot constitute yet more complex meanings of its surrounding. Its volitional body

³¹ Husserl, E III 5, cit. in Enzo PACI, *Tempo e verità nella fenomenologia di Husserl*, Laterza, Bari 1961, pp. 260-262

³² Edmund HUSSERL, *Husserliana Material*, vol. IV, *Natur und Geist. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1919*. (M. Weiler ed.) Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Netherlands 2002, p. 186 (hereafter abridged as *Hua Mat IV*)

³³ Edmund HUSSERL, *Husserliana*, vol. XXXIII. *Die 'Bernauer Manuskripte' über das Zeitbewußtsein* (R. Bernet & D. Lohmar). Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Netherlands 2001, text 1.

³⁴ *Ivi*, *Hua XXXIII*, texts, 1, 5, 6, 9, 10.

can only accept or refuse what the passivity of its intentions proposes to it at each time. This ego can only add or subtract itself to the meanings and values that have already been constituted in the hosting country. The change of life of the newcomer is such that inevitably impacts the passive layer of its intentions and for a period of time, it prevents the constitutive core of its emotional life to constitute complex meanings and values that can feel congruent to the experience. It generates a summation of information and not a constitution of meanings yet. In the case of Ulysses Syndrome, an improper form of collective intentionality occurs where the layer of collective emotions affecting the ego is incongruent with the previous original one. I believe that introducing a structural difference between sharing and collective emotions can create the space to correct the incongruence as it stimulates the responsibility of the ego to own its pre-reflective layer of intention, constitute meanings out of it, and share it in the collective intention.

5. The Supra-Object of Collective Emotions

According to Stein there is no explicit difference between shared and collective emotions. Emotional sharing indicates, in fact, life-colouring (*Lebensfaerbung*)³⁵ or a collective feeling (*Gemeinfuehle*) that, so to speak, paces the «rhythm of a communal experience».³⁶ (Emotional sharing originates in a we-subject that exerts its own intentionality³⁷ through a sort of «individual subject» who may, «notwithstanding its distinctness and ineliminable solitariness, [become] a member of a supra-individual subject (*Glied eines überindividuellen Subjekts*)».³⁸ According to Stein, in emotional sharing the individuals participating the we-subject go through their own emotions as a plural subject. The plural subject is not a summation of individual subjects but is a constituting plural one that acquires its particular meaning from, so to speak, the mereological interaction of parts and its whole.

I believe that in the case of Ulysses Syndrome it is important to distinguish collective from shared emotions, especially in the summative risk that collective emotions can involve. What seems problematic, in fact, is how the we-subject is constituted and if all the subjects partaking of this constitution are equally represented. As mentioned before, it seems that the newcomer has a structural difficulty to partake in this constitution – because of the change of language, the bodily adjustments, the new working conditions, etc. – which results in the development of a potential incongruence between the pre-

³⁵ *Ivi*, 1922, p. 158.

³⁶ *Ivi*, 1917, 109.

³⁷ *Ivi*, 1922, pp. 113, 115, 117.

³⁸ *Ivi*, 1922, p. 113.

reflective experience of their ego and the we-subject. The volitional body of this ego tends to delegate the meanings and values constituted from the emotional collective experience to an external we-subject which eventually leads to lose touch with its own agency and meaning-making responsibility.

According to Stein, the intentionality of the we-subject (experiencer) can be fulfilled by a supra-object communally experienced in feelings of the group. The group has its own emotional life-power or energy that aims at the realization of a shared goal. As Stein remarks, a person can feel an emotion that is shared by a group and when this emotion is fulfilled the fulfillment is not expressed in first person singular but in the first-person plural as a member of a group³⁹ and the content of this fulfillment is a shared one. I believe that Ulysses syndrome affects those people whose intentions are repeatedly not fulfilled by the supra-object.

5.1. Grievance in Collective and Shared Emotions

There is a difference between the supra-object and the constituted object which directly affects the distinction between collective and shared emotions. To explain the difference between supra and constituted objects we can use the example of grieving that served both Stein's and Scheler's arguments.

Parents grieving the death of their children are both fulfilling the same emotions; there is no individual feeling there but a «we are grieving».⁴⁰ The content of their collective intention is a supra-object which fulfills the intentionality of the collective emotions that they are experiencing, that is, grieving.

«The father and the mother stand beside the dead body of a beloved child. They feel in common the 'same' sorrow, the 'same' anguish. It is not that A feels this sorrow and B feels it also, and moreover that they both know they are feeling it. No, it is a *feeling-in-common*. A's sorrow is in no way 'objectual' for B here, as it is, e.g. for their friend C, who joins them, and commiserates 'with them' or 'upon their sorrow'. On the contrary, they feel it together, in the sense that they feel and experience in common, not only the self-same value-situation, but also the same keenness of emotion in regard to it. The sorrow, as value-content, and the grief, as characterizing the functional relation thereto, are here *one and identical*».⁴¹

³⁹ *Ivi*, 1922, p. 116.

⁴⁰ *Ivi*, 1922, p. 116

⁴¹ Max SHELER, *The Constitution of the Human Being*, trans. John Cutting, Marquette University Press, 2008, pp. 12-13, translation modified.

«Certainly, I, the individual ego, am filled up with grief (over the loss of our member). But I feel myself not alone with it. Rather, I feel our grief. The experience is essentially colored by the fact that others are partaking in it, or better, by the fact that I am partaking in it only as a member of a community. We are affected by the loss, and we grieve over it. And this “we” encompasses not only those who feel the grief as I do, but all those who are included in the group; even those who perhaps do not know of the event, and even the members of the group who lived earlier or will live later».⁴²

The problem of newcomers’ emotional life lies exactly in the fulfillment of this reflecting feeling. The constitution of the we-subject does not necessarily take place in the communion of intentions, hence they cannot generate contents that make sense to them. The supra-object is a meaningless or foreign object to them. To offer meaningful comfort to their grievance, the correlate of their grievance has to be a constituted object which holds a sense in which they can participate and recognize themselves.

In the story I mentioned above about the Moluccan woman who was grieving for her father, the fulfillment of the collective subject’s intention was not doing justice to what the object of her intention demanded. Rather, the communal intention experiencer-experienced was taking room away from the genuineness of her grieving experience.⁴³ Because of the space-time structure on which any we-relation is based her grievance was not one with the time and space of the other members of her family on the Moluccan islands nor with those around her in the Netherlands.

5.1.1. Fusion versus Sharing

According to Schmid⁴⁴ shared feelings involve a phenomenological fusion in a straightforward sense. When parents are grieving for their child, «while both individuals experience a feeling of grief, there are not two feelings involved in this case, but only *one*. The parents’ feeling of grief is *numerically identical*».⁴⁵ According to Schmid, “I can’t really know how you feel, because my feeling *is* your feeling, or rather: my feeling isn’t really mine, and yours isn’t yours, but *ours*. Shared feelings are conscious experiences whose subjective aspect is not singular (‘for me’), but plural (‘for us’).”⁴⁶

⁴² *Ivi*, 1922, p. 117.

⁴³ SCHUTZ, *The Homecomer*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ Hans Bernhard SCHMID, *Plural Self-Awareness*, “Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences”, 13, 2014, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Hans Bernhard SCHMID, *Plural Action. Essays in Philosophy and Social Science*. Springer, Dordrecht 2009, p. 69.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 9

Differently from Schmid and more in line with Szanto's account of shared emotions,⁴⁷ I believe that this fusion is true for collective emotions more than for shared emotions. For emotions to be shared an ego has to be there and take the responsibility for the network of passive data that its own feelings and sensations are producing. The volitional body of this ego has to decide what to share of it and what meanings and values to assign to these data. When successful, the experienced content of collective emotions is a supra-object resulting from the contagious fusion and not summation of we-intentions of the individuals partaking that emotions. Yet, for the newcomers, as explained before, it is more natural to let themselves go with this fusion given their occurring crisis of habitual thinking. On the other hand, in shared emotions the sensorial-object correlated to a shared given emotion has sufficient structural space to do justice to what is experienced because it involves an egoic constituting activity. The pre-reflected layer of what that object is for the ego and for the environment to which the ego belongs remains as the basic layer of the intentional act but there is the space for the ego to act through a sharing act toward collectivity. The intentional fulfillment of shared emotions has higher chances to be congruent to the emotion I am experiencing and on which I am reflecting while I am creating a meaning. The shared intention can be fulfilled if the «intention to realize the communal experience is fulfilled» and, secondly, the intention «does justice» to «what the object demands».⁴⁸ While Stein⁴⁹ and Schmid seem to believe that a shared emotion can be fulfilled with a supra-object, I believe that an emotion is fully shared when its intentional correlate, the experienced, is a constituted content that does justice to what is given in the pre-reflective realm through the network of affections, sensations, and feeling. The supra-object is the intentional correlate of collective and not shared emotions which results, at its best, as the correlate of fusion of we-intentions. While shared emotions involve the awake ego to reflect on its pre-reflective layer as it emerges from the passive network of sensations, feelings and emotions, collective emotions can remain empty on a pre-reflective layer and their reference can be fulfilled by a supra-object whose values and

⁴⁷ Thomas SZANTO, *Collective Emotions, Normativity and Empathy: a Steinen Account*, "Journal of Human Studies", 38, 2015, 503–527.

⁴⁸ Elaine HATFIELD *et al.*, *Emotional contagion as a precursor to collective emotions*. In C. von Scheve & M. Salmela, *Series in affective science. Collective emotions: Perspectives from psychology, philosophy, and sociology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014, pp. 108-122.

⁴⁹ «If none of the members feels the appropriate grief, then one has to say that the loss is not correctly appreciated by the unit. If only one member has realized within herself the rationally required (vernunftmäßig gefordert) sense-content, then that no longer holds: for then the one is feeling "in the name of the unit," and in her the unit has satisfied the claim placed upon it [...] then, that which is intended in [by the others] came to fulfillment in the experience of this one alone» (1922: 115f.).

meanings do not resonate with the pre-reflective layer of the participants. There is no need for intentional reflection in collective emotions – parents are grieving and the spontaneity of that emotions is fulfilled spontaneously on a sensuous level. For shared emotions, instead, the ego has to take a position in relation to its pre-reflective content and make a meaning out of it – a woman needs to grieve her father’s death in a meaningful way otherwise her passive life would create an alternate reality as outlet for her strong emotions (the olfactory hallucinations, for example).

As remarked by Schutz,⁵⁰ the newcomer has to put into crisis the thinking as usual system of habituation, hence everything has to be put in question every day, even more so its own emotions. Collective emotions cannot rise in a way that is consistent to the passivity of its experience because that experience is not habitual yet, which means that it takes more reflective effort to bring it to a meaning and value constitution level.

I think that introducing this distinction between collective and shared emotions is important to make room for expressing congruent emotions within a diverse community especially in the early stages of assimilation in which patterns of habituations have yet to be established. It is, in fact, the incongruent content of collective emotions that might lead to a stratification of incongruent emotional contents and a consequent lack of well-being. Keeping in mind the difference between shared and collective emotions can bring benefit to the emotional balance of the newcomers.

6. Concluding Remarks

As we saw above, in Ulysses Syndrome the emotional problem is originally triggered by the disruption of the habitual thinking in the hosting society which might undermine the meaning-constitution activity that transits from the pre-reflective into the reflective layers. The cultural pattern of the approached group is no longer a subject matter of the newcomer’s thought but a segment of the world which has to be dominated by action. The newcomer is a person that has to question everything, while the member of the approached group does not question anything of it; it is a person who lost authority on its own system of beliefs – accordingly on the pre-reflective layer sensations, feelings, emotions – because he does not partake in the vivid historical tradition by which it has been formed.⁵¹

In the case of acute suffering we have examined, the problem focuses on the sensorial object of emotions. While in collective emotions there is a high risk that almost all the individual’s pre-reflective realm is not brought into reflection because of the fusion

⁵⁰ SCHUTZ, *The Homecomer*.

⁵¹ *Ivi*, p. 97.

occurring in the we-intentions and its fulfilment with the supra-object; shared emotions leave more space for the individuals to become responsible of their emotional sharing and for the transformation of the pre-reflective contents of their emotions into congruent meanings and values.

In the case of Eka, despite the good intentions of the people around her she was completely left alone in her grievance. The collective web of emotions occurring in that specific spatio-temporal locus became an empty token which was preventing her volitional body to come in touch with her pre-reflective network of feelings and sensations and to transform that network into a meaning. The fulfilment of her intentional act was completed by a concreteness that was foreign to her – a supra-object congruent with foreign intentions. The immediate community around her took part of her mourning feelings and in good faith created a space for these common feelings to be expressed; yet this collective emotional grievance was not congruent to Eka's passive primordial feelings. That collective unity, then, caused her need to find a new fulfilment for her emotional intentions, the depression and later on hallucinations. Yet, her olfactory hallucinations were explained by the hosting community not as emotional incongruence and need for integrity but as psychotic episodes; her feeling of deep sadness was connected to unresolved conflict in her family. The truth is that the sensory object or the content of her grievance was not fulfilled by a content that felt congruent to her intentions.

For the newcomers, it often happens that collective intentions and their consequent content expressed in the supra-object fosters the emotional incongruence rather than reinforcing their sense of integrity. The physical and geographical incongruence that is at the basis of the newcomer's life produces an ongoing constitution of passive contents that do not match the individual intentions. That is, Eka experienced the loss of her father, yet life went on around her. Even if her brother probably felt her same grievance, the pre-reflective passive intention constituting the grievance for their loss was made more difficult by a society that felt in all foreign. Small evocative gestures signaling the grievance and showing respect for it – for example, in Western societies it would be publishing an obituary, fasting, dressing in black – all that went missing for her. The pre-reflective contents that are muted in the passivity of life and the emotional sharing transformed itself into an incongruent collective emotion. Even Stein remarks that «[...] the content of the individual experience can very closely approximate what is required by the supra-individual object, and yet by no means does it need to coincide

with the content of the communal experience». ⁵² Emotional habituation ⁵³ can generate an emotional regulative pattern ⁵⁴ that keeps proposing misidentification and incongruence.

A way in which this incongruence can be attenuated is through the commitment expressed by the individual to the normative patterns through time. Since the geographical distance cannot change and the newcomer is thrown into a new reality that might feel dystopian at times, it is important to educate the newcomers and the people around them to the quality of their demands in meeting the content of shared emotions. On this point, I think that Gilbert's account of shared emotions can be helpful to develop this form of education. ⁵⁵ Gilbert remarks, in fact, that when sharing emotions in a collective manner the individual must «have a standing to demand», or to «rebuke one another» for what «is not in the spirit of the collective emotion», which (normatively) «instructs» and «guides» the «public performance», including the adequacy of its display and the emotion's «expressive quality». ⁵⁶ Physicians, professional caregivers, mental health personnel should be put in the position of understanding this demand and facilitate the display of expressive qualities that might be diluted or even erased in the normative pattern generated by emotional habituation. If one encounters difficulty in expressing its own emotions because the emotional culture around them prevents it in an active or passive way, then suppression or unhealthy self-regulation would necessarily follow and it will contribute to feeling trapped in constrictive emotional patterns. ⁵⁷ Exercising the commitment to emotional sharing and the emotional pattern can be a way to avoid the incongruence. ⁵⁸

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⁵² STEIN, *Zur Problem der Einfühlung*, p. 28.

⁵³ John DRUMMOND, *Respect as a Moral Emotion: A Phenomenological Approach*. “Husserl Studies,” 22, 1, 2006, p. 13

⁵⁴ Nico FRIJDA, *Studies in Emotions and Social Interactions. The Emotions*. Polity Press, Cambridge 1986.

⁵⁵ Paul GILBERT, *The Origins and Nature of Compassion Focused Therapy*, “British Journal of Clinical Psychology,” 53, 1, 2014, pp. 6-4.

⁵⁶ *Ivi*, p. 23

⁵⁷ Giovanna COLOMBETTI, Tom, ROBERTS, *Extending the Extended Mind: The Case for Extended Affectivity*, “Philosophical Studies,” 172, 5, 2015, pp. 1243-1263.

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