Kinesthetic Empathy, Dance, and Technology

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I will argue that for us to experience the best empathy with others, we must view their facial expressions or bodily gestures, and/or hear their voices' tones and intonations. In contrast, when we view text or static images while we use Facebook, email, or text messaging, we do not experience the best empathy. Imagine the time when you most clearly and strongly empathized with someone because of text or static images you read or saw on Facebook. I argue that no matter how well you empathized, humans are capable of experiencing empathy that is even better when they communicate face-to-face and respond to paralinguistic and non-verbal cues.

I define the "best" empathy as that which is most strongly felt and is most conducive to experiencing benevolence for others. Since it is morally good to be someone who experiences benevolence, empathy that is more conducive to benevolence can be considered "better"—in a normative sense—than empathy that is less conducive to it.

No doubt, it is possible to experience strong feelings of empathy and benevolence as a result of reading text and viewing static images online.[1] Likewise, it seems possible to imagine scenarios in which one person empathizes very well with another as a result of reading Facebook posts or email, and would fail to empathize as well face-to-face. Finally, it is possible to imagine that certain people might empathize better with others via Facebook or email than they do in person. But these possibilities are beside the point. Rather, I argue only that, while people read text on Facebook or in email, they will never experience the *best* empathy of which humans, overall, are capable.

Much of this paper focuses on providing a detailed interpretation of David Hume's account of sympathy, which will serve as this paper's foundation, and

1. As one example, Sushama Kasbekar describes the strong emotional responses individuals felt in response to viewing static photos of Aylan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian refugee who, with his brother and mother, drowned as they tried to make their way from Turkey to a Greek island (Kasbekar 2016). After viewing photos that had been widely shared on Twitter and Facebook, those interviewed expressed strong empathetic, emotional, and heartfelt responses. I discuss this example again in part IV.

which I take to be relevant to recent discussions of empathy. I interpret Hume to claim that, in order for us to experience the strongest empathy for another person, we must see or hear that person's facial expressions, gestures, and vocal intonations. In order to argue that Hume is correct, I appeal to the work of philosophers, dance theorists, neuroscientists, and psychologists—such as Albert Borgmann, John Martin, Marco Iacoboni, and Justin Kruger—whose work, taken together, highlight the importance of gesture, expression, and voice.[2]

Albert Borgmann suggests that were we to rely too heavily on technological devices—like those that do not let us engage with expression and voice—our lives might become disengaged, distracted, and lonely. John Martin suggests that, if we fail to respond empathetically to the motions we see in dance, the dance would be ineffectual and fail to serve its function. Marco Iacoboni highlights the ways our brains respond when we witness and mimic facial expressions, and how those responses play a key role in empathy. And Justin Kruger focuses on the differences between communicating face-to-face and communicating via email with fewer nonverbal and paralinguistic cues.

David Hume, more clearly than his contemporaries, links the notions of empathy and benevolence. Studies from psychology and neuroscience support Hume's contention that the more strongly we empathize with people, the more likely we are to experience benevolence toward them. I will argue that while we use Facebook, text, and email, we do not experience the strongest empathy, and so do not experience the empathy that is most conducive to benevolence. Since it is morally good to be benevolent, while we use Facebook, text messaging, and email, we do not experience the kind of empathy that is most conducive to a morally ideal life.

I. Philosophy of Technology, Albert Borgmann

Before defining my terms and outlining how and why I appeal to the work of theorists from numerous disciplines, I outline the critique of technology I have in mind. I reflect on communicating face-to-face in relation to what Albert

2. Susan Leigh Foster draws conceptual connections between David Hume's and Adam Smith's accounts of sympathy and explanations of spectators' responses to dance offered by dance theorists such as John Martin (Foster 2011, 137-145 and 155-163). Foster connects these to the work of neuroscientists on mirror neurons (165-168). She focuses on these connections for very different reasons and does not arrive at my conclusions.

Borgmann calls "focal things," such as country roads, home-cooked meals, and hearths. Through these reflections, we can come to better appreciate the cost of any form of communication in which, unlike in face-to-face discussion, we cannot view each other's expressions and gestures or hear each other's voices.

Borgmann suggests that a road near a creek, out in the country, can be an example of what is called a "focal thing," something that clarifies important relations in our lives (Borgmann 1984, 197).[3] According to theorists like Borgmann, there is a "splendor" in the simplicity of a lengthy run on a road (202), and running on a road "demands patience, endurance, skill, and the resoluteness of regular practice" (Strong and Higgs 2000, 22). According to these theorists, the run along the road is also inseparable from its context—from the world and our engagement with it. When running on the road, there is a "telling continuity" between the road "and the weather overhead, between the high, oily waters of the creek, the month of May, the receding snowfields, and the previous winter's snowfall" (23). These theorists suggest that the road gathers together all of the unique experiences of a particular day and physical activity, and offers the runner a unified experience (22).

Borgmann suggests that focal things and events can bring us together in a way that devices cannot, and he offers additional examples of focal things, including the hearth of the past and the home-cooked family meal. Borgmann contends that a family meal can be a focal event that "gathers the scattered family around the table," and "recollects and presents a tradition," focusing us on family traditions, etiquette, and face-to-face exchanges (Borgmann 1984, 204). A hearth of the past "gathered the work and leisure of a family and gave the house a center" (41-2). Borgmann writes that the hearth's "coldness marked the morning, and . . . its warmth the beginning of the day." He suggests that a hearth also defined family members' place in the household: "The mother built the fire, the children kept the firebox filled, and the father cut the firewood" (42).

Borgmann maintains that devices such as treadmills and modern heaters offer limited commodities rather than unified experiences. According to

3. Pieter Tijmes writes: "One searches in vain for a definition of focal things; rather, Borgmann shows them off deictically—testimonially or appellatively. Focal things are of different origins and often fulfill different roles, making it impossible to point to a specific definition. Focal things form a group and belong to each other without sharing a fixed general characteristic" (2001, 22). Instead, they can be characterized as those things that have a central meaning in our lives, grant us a "central orientation" (22), incorporate a sense of meaning (23), and clarify important relations in our lives (Borgmann 1984, 197). Like Borgmann, I provide examples in order to provide a better sense.

Borgmann, a hearth (a focal thing) used to do far more than merely offer warmth, but that is all a modern heater does. Microwave dinners might draw us together, but not in the same robust way as a home-cooked meal. According to theorists like Borgmann, while a run on a road near a creek offers a wholly unified experience, a run on a treadmill is "discontinuous with this larger context of one's life, community, and place" (Strong and Higgs 2000, 23). These theorists suggest that a treadmill isolates just a few aspects of a run from the rest; it provides the exercise of muscles without the weather, the changing seasons, and the sights and smells of a forever-changing, natural environment. Borgmann worries that, if we are consumed by devices and lose touch with focal things and practices, our lives might become to a greater degree disengaged, distracted, and lonely (1984, 76).

I do not intend to endorse Borgmann's value judgments, or to argue that he is correct that focal things such as hearths, home cooked meals, and country roads are superior to devices such as heaters, microwaves and treadmills. But, in later sections, I will argue that communicating via text—using Facebook or email—has a cost. I will argue that while we communicate via text, we cannot experience the kind of empathy that is most conducive to experiencing benevolence for others, as is morally good for us.[4] Regardless of whether Borgmann is correct about heaters, microwaves, and treadmills, I will contend that communicating face-to-face is a unified experience in a way that communicating via text is not, and humans are capable of experiencing better empathy when they are engaged in the kind of unified experience face-to-face communication provides. Communicating face-to-face does not just involve words; it involves a manifold engagement, a unified experience of facial expressions, movements, gestures, vocal tone, and intonation. In contrast, email is a more limited form of communication because of its comparative lack of nonverbal and paralinguistic cues such as inflection, gesture, and vocal expressions (Epley and Kruger 2005, 414-15). My target in this paper will be any form of communication that does not let us see one another's gestures or expressions or hear each other's voices. I write about Facebook, email, and text-messaging interchangeably, because I am only concerned with this limitation that they share in common.

4. See my argument in Section VIII, the premises of which are defended in earlier sections, which concludes that while we are using Facebook, email, or text-messaging, we do not experience the kind of empathy that is most conducive to benevolence.

II. An Interdisciplinary Approach

Here, I comment on the interdisciplinary method I will employ to defend my conclusions, explaining why I appeal to theories from an array of disciplines and draw connections between them.

Suppose you have no opinion about the truth of a claim, *x*. Now suppose you subsequently come to learn that a number of theorists whose work you greatly respect all support *x*. Even if you have no opinion about whether their arguments are sound, you would still have greater reason to believe that *x* might be true than you had before. You would not have *proof* that it is true, but you would have greater *reason*. You would have greater reason even if the theorists disagree on a wide variety of topics including substantial claims directly related to *x*. Further, *ceteris paribus,* you have greater reason to believe that *x* might be true if the theorists belong to a wide array of different disciplines than if they all share the same discipline, because theorists from different disciplines, who employ different strategies, are less likely to make the same mistakes. Finally, if these theorists' accounts of *x* seem to fit together into a compelling bigger picture, you would have even greater reason to believe *x* might be true, because its truth would help to explain the "fit" between the theories.

I seek to establish, based on the agreement of respected theorists and the "fit" of their theories, that we have good reason to believe my conclusions about kinesthetic empathy might be true. For this essay, broad scope is a virtue. I focus on the work of a variety of theorists, because, as suggested above, this method is the most successful when the theorists discussed belong to an array of different disciplines.

It is not essential that I focus on the sometimes substantial ways in which the theorists I discuss would disagree. As suggested, you come to have greater reason to believe a claim, *x*, might be true after learning that respected theorists agree on it, even if those theorists disagree on a wide variety of other points including those directly related to *x*. Likewise, I will not focus on the small details of each theory. Regardless of their details, if I can show that these theories agree on key claims, I will have provided greater reason to believe those claims are true. At times this essay is very detailed, but only as is necessary to demonstrate that each of the theories can be taken to support my conclusions.

I do not provide proof that the theorists' arguments I discuss are sound. As suggested above, when you come to realize that respected theorists agree on a

claim, you come to have greater reason to believe that claim might be true even if you are not sure whether their arguments for the claim are sound.

Ultimately, this paper does not provide solid proof for its conclusions; it seeks only to provide better reason to believe they might be true. As a helpful analogy, coming from a different branch of philosophy, suppose you had no idea whether mind-body dualism is correct, and you subsequently come to learn that a number of theorists whose work you greatly respect are all different sorts of dualists, and that, despite great disagreements, their theories also fit together in compelling ways. You would then have greater reason to believe that some kind of dualism might, in fact, be correct. You would by no means have proof, or a perfect argument, but it would certainly be worth exploring further. Likewise, in this essay, I seek to provide greater reason to support conclusions about kinesthetic empathy.

I take "kinesthesia" to refer to "sensations of movement and position" (Reynolds and Reason 2012, 18). These sensations can be either internal (proprioception) or external (exteroception)—feeling your own muscles move, or seeing, hearing, (etc.) the movements and positions of other people and objects (Reason and Reynolds 2010, 52-53). I take "empathy" to refer to "feeling what one takes another person to be feeling" (Prinz 2011, 212), where this "taking," which need not be accurate,[5] can be either basic, non-conscious and automatic, a kind of emotional contagion, or it can involve a more complicated and sometimes even conscious exercise of the imagination. I recognize that sometimes when we empathize with someone in pain, we need not ourselves feel pain. Sometimes, instead of feeling another person's particular sensation, it is sufficient for us to feel the same sort of desire as that person, such as the desire for that person's relief. Overall, I take "kinesthetic empathy" to refer to "feeling what one takes another person to be feeling" (ibid.) as a result of sensing that person's movements and position.

These are stipulative definitions; I make no claims about how we typically use these terms or how we ought typically to use them. I acknowledge that few if any theorists adopt all three definitions. These definitions are rough guides, not strict principles. I discuss work across disciplines by theorists who use these and other terms in numerous ways. Despite differences in their use of terminology,

5. In section IV, I will argue that sometimes we can experience empathy that is both strong and conducive to benevolence, without accurately feeling anything like what another is feeling, such as the empathy we experience for someone who is asleep, and isn't aware of some imminent danger.

and shifting of language in general, I can nonetheless demonstrate that each theorist makes claims that fit together into a compelling bigger picture and which, if true, support this paper's conclusions.

III. Dance Theory, John Martin

I start with modern dance theory because it highlights the embodied nature of empathy. Bodily movement is central to dance,[6] and the idea that we respond to this movement through kinesthetic empathy plays a key role in John Martin's account of modern dance, becoming "the cornerstone of a new dance genre, defining the relationship between dancer and spectator" (Reynolds and Reason 2012, 19). Some dance theorists, adopting an expression theory, suggest that the very function of dance is to express feelings, particularly emotions, by means of both bodily movement and the audience's capacity for an empathetic response (Martin 1965a, 23; Carroll 2003, 588-9).[7]

According to Martin, an audience must respond with kinesthetic empathy—watching movements and responding empathetically —in order for a dance to be wholly effective, fulfilling its function and impacting its audience. By articulating this stance, I set the stage for my later claim that we must see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, and intonations in order to have the best sort of empathetic relationships in everyday life.

Martin uses the phrases "muscular sympathy" and "kinesthetic sympathy" (Martin 1965b, 11-2), rather than "kinesthetic empathy." Martin understands "kinesthetic sympathy" differently from the way I do, as "feeling what another's muscles were doing" (Foster 2011, 156). He claims that when an audience watches a dancer perform a motion, "the movement is transferred in effect by kinesthetic sympathy to the muscles of the spectator" (Martin 1965b, 8). For example, if we see someone yawn, we are likely to yawn, and we laugh if we see that person laugh (Martin 1965a, 17). But our muscular responses to watching others' movements can be much smaller and harder to notice: "Psychologists have discovered changes

6. Providing necessary or sufficient conditions for dance is outside of the scope of this paper (see Carroll 2003), but theorists tend to agree that bodily movement is important, claiming that dance is either composed of movements, or, if not, is generated by them (see for example, Beardsley 1982).

7. Not all dance theorists adopt this perspective, and even many who adopt an expression theory do not. See Carroll 2003 for a brief summary of different theories of dance.

in the postural condition of the muscles . . . though there is not outward movement of any kind visible." According to Martin, when we watch a dance, we respond with an "inner mimicry" (19), dancing along with the dancer in a way that is not externally visible: "Though by all outward appearances we shall be sitting quietly in our chairs, we shall nevertheless be dancing synthetically with all our musculature" (23). Our bodies register our muscles' movements, and since we are "used to associating" these movements with specific emotions, intentions, and thoughts, we automatically and genuinely experience those emotions ourselves (23; Foster 2011, 157) or we arrive "by induction at the intention of the particular movement under consideration" (Martin 1965b, 85). Emotions animate dancers' movements, and when we see those movements and imitate them inside us, we come to experience the same emotions as the dancer. So, Martin contends that "movement . . . is a medium for the transference of an . . . emotional concept from the consciousness of one individual to that of another" (13). In fact, Martin suggests, "It is the dancer's whole function to lead us into imitating his actions with our faculty for inner mimicry in order that we may experience his feelings" (Martin 1965a, 23). We not only have direct access to dancers' feelings, but it is the dancers' function to share those feelings with us (Reynolds and Reason, 2012, 19). Martin uses the term "kinesthetic sympathy," but I take him to be referring, at least roughly, to what I have called "kinesthetic empathy."

Martin suggests that the ideal spectator would consciously rely on his/her faculty of "inner mimicry": "It is essential when approaching the dance to carry along the expectation of response to movement and a reliance on the faculty of 'inner mimicry'" (Martin 1965a, 25; also see Reason and Reynolds 2010, 53-4). Without this inner mimicry, and the kinesthetic empathy it makes possible, Martin suggests that dance would be "ineffectual" (Martin 1965a, 25). Further, without mimicry and empathy, a dancer could not fulfill his or her function, which, again, is "to lead us into imitating his actions with our faculty for inner mimicry in order that we may experience his feelings" (23). For Martin, the best dance—the most effectual, meaningful dance—requires kinesthetic empathy.

I do not intend to claim that Martin is correct on this point. In fact, while I will not discuss this further, I am inclined to think that the claim is too broad; some performances have different goals, and can be ideally effective without evoking strong, kinesthetic empathy in audiences (see Carroll 2003). Beyond this, it is implausible that the majority of audience members would feel the same emotional responses as a result of watching a dance, let alone all share feelings similar to those experienced by the dancer, insofar as there is clear evidence that

different people, with different cultural and life experiences, experience the same dance very differently (Reason and Reynolds, 2010). Despite these difficulties, I nonetheless think there is value to be drawn from Martin's claims.[8]

Reflecting on interviews with people who discussed dance performances they had recently watched, Reason and Reynolds find that audiences' responses, sometimes passionately expressed, often recalled Martin's concepts of "inner mimicry" and "kinesthetic sympathy" (Reason and Reynolds 2010, 60). After watching dances, audience members with experience dancing made claims like: "I was imagining doing it myself," and "I wanted to do it myself," (ibid.). Also, the "perfect, effortless character of the movement" of a ballet makes some audience members "feel good," and they claim that dance "gladdens the heart," and "it calms you down, relaxes you" (66). While these remarks do not clearly indicate that audience members have direct access to dancers' feelings as Martin suggests, they do imply that audiences can connect with the dancers' movements and feel emotions associated with them (68).

A dance need not, and likely does not, enable its audience members to all share the feelings felt by the dancers, insofar as different audience members, with different cultures and experiences, respond to dance very differently. Rather, Reynolds suggests that we might appropriately understand an audience's empathetic response to dance in "affective" terms rather than in terms of emotion, where "affect denotes a stage where emotions are still in the process of forming and have not yet taken on a definable identity" (Reynolds 2012, 124). Different audience members will respond to the same dance with different affective states, experiencing the dance as "an embodied intensity" (ibid., 132).

While Martin's account is flawed in some respects, there is truth to it—truth that would be lost if we focused, instead, on Reason and Reynolds's theories.[9] For example, unlike Reason and Reynolds, Martin claims that an

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8. For different reasons from those discussed in this paper, Noel Carroll and William P. Seeley claim that John Martin "was exceedingly prescient" (Carroll and Seeley 2013, 177). They contend that what they call "kinetic transfer," evident in examples such as the "contagious rhythmic transfer that takes over our feet when we watch classic tap dancers," contributes to, but does not determine, our understanding and appreciation of dance (in particular, see 77 and 183-184). To support their claims, they point to very different evidence from neuroscience and behavioral studies. Further discussion is outside the scope of this paper.

9. John Stuart Mill writes that, when one adopts a new theory that one sees as less problematic than a former one, one, "for the most part only substitutes one partial and incomplete truth for another; improvement consisting chiefly in this. That the new

audience must respond with kinesthetic empathy for a modern dance to be effective. If we accepted Martin's conception of kinesthetic empathy, we should think that his claim is mistaken. Nonetheless, the discussions above do suggest that *many* dances are only effective because their audiences respond with kinesthetic empathy, understood not in terms of sharing the same emotions as dancers on stage, but rather in terms of the dance's effect on the audience's affect. Later, we will see that Martin's insistence that kinesthetic empathy is *good*—is necessary for effective dance—makes his theory fit well with Hume's discussion of sympathy. On a different note, but just as importantly, Martin's unique way of discussing internal mimicry also makes his theory fit well with the studies from psychology and neuroscience discussed below.

IV. Early Modern Accounts of Sympathy, David Hume

In this section, I provide a brief account of Hume's theory of sympathy, emphasizing the importance of kinesthesia, and how sympathy relates to benevolence.[10] In the next section, I will explicitly relate Hume's theory to Martin's account of dance. Ultimately, I will contend that, by recognizing how these and other theories fit together into a compelling bigger picture, we can come to recognize that we can only experience the best empathy, which is most conducive to benevolence, by watching each other's gestures and listening to each other's voices.

Hume writes that to sympathize with other people is "to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments however different from, or even contrary to, our own" (Hume 2000, 2.1.11.2).[11] According to Hume, the process of sympathy has two distinct stages (Chismar 1988-9, 238; Kirby 2003: 310). First, we form an idea of that person's passion after observing that passion's "external signs" and inferring the passion from them (Hume 2000, 2.1.11.3 & 3.3.1.7). For an example, we might expand on Hume's example of sympathizing with a beggar (2.2.9.16). When we see the beggar, we form an idea of the beggar's passions, such

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fragment of truth is more wanted, more adapted to the needs of the time, than that which it displaces" (Mill 2015, 87).

10. Vitz (2004) and others wonder if there are substantial differences between Hume's accounts of sympathy in his *Treatise* and *Second Enquiry*. I won't pursue these considerations, and focus almost exclusively on Hume's account from the *Treatise*.

11. All references to Hume's *Treatise* are cited by book, part, section, and paragraph.

as grief, by observing the "external signs" of that grief—such as the way the beggar looks and is dressed, his facial expressions (countenance), gestures, what he says, and the sound of his voice, all of which communicate his grief to us (2.1.11.3 & 3.3.1.7; also see Vitz 2004, 266).

Second, the imagination must convert the idea of that passion into an impression inside us (Hume 2000, 2.1.11.5). Because "there is a great resemblance among all human creatures" (Hume 2000, 2.1.11.5), we recognize—if subconsciously—that the beggar is similar to us. This makes our idea of the beggar's grief seem all the more real. The principle of sympathy operates on the imagination; we conceive of the beggar's grief "in the strongest and most lively manner" (2.1.11.6), and the idea of the beggar's grief becomes an impression in us (2.1.11.3; Vitz 2004, 266). The impression "acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself" (Hume 2000, 2.1.11.3). We experience and "enter into" (2.1.11.5) the beggar's grief, sharing his passion which has been communicated to us.[12]

Hume is clear about the role of what we have been calling "kinesthesia" in experiencing sympathy. He notes that we often sympathize with a person after making an inference to the emotions of that person on the basis of seeing or hearing that person's facial expressions (countenance), gestures, and vocal intonations.[13] We often form an idea of another person's passion—an idea necessary for sympathy—when we "see the effects of passion in the voice and gesture" (3.3.1.7), witnessing "external signs in the countenance and conversation" (2.1.11.3). So, we sympathize with someone who is sorrowful as a result of seeing or hearing that person's sorrowful expressions, gestures, and voice. Hume notes, "A chearful countenance infuses a sensible complacency and serenity into my mind; as an angry or sorrowful one throws a sudden damp upon me" (2.1.11.2). Putting this idea generally, we feel sympathy for someone's sorrow after witnessing the effects of the sorrow on the person's behavior and voice.

Granted, Hume does allow that we can sympathetically feel distress for someone, even if that person is not behaving in distressed way—even if that person does not have distressed gestures or expressions. We sometimes sympathize with someone after witnessing the *causes* of a passion, rather than that

12. Vitz notes that Hume uses the term "sympathy" to refer to three different aspects of the way we "enter into" the sympathy of others (Vitz 2004, 263-264). At times, the term refers to a cognitive mechanism, the process of conversion from idea to impression, or the impression itself.

13. For a discussion of the significance of this inference, see Kirby 2003, 310-311.

passion's *effects* on a person's behavior (Chismar 1988-9, 239; Kirby 2003, 312). Hume suggests that we might sympathetically feel sorrow for someone whom we see endure what we believe is a grave misfortune, even though the person does not think much of it, and shows no sign of sorrow (Hume 2000, 2.2.7.5; Kirby 2003: 311-312). We might also sympathize with someone who, asleep in a field, is unknowingly "in danger of being trod under foot by horses" (Hume 2000, 2.2.9.13), even though the person, unaware and asleep, shows no sign of fear in his/her actions.

Nonetheless, I argue below that, according Hume, the *best* sympathy of which humans are capable only occurs when we see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, and voices. I contend that, for Hume, we are capable of stronger sympathy when we interact face-to-face and are able to respond to paralinguistic and non-verbal cues. Later, I will argue that, according to Hume, kinesthesia is also particularly conducive to benevolence.

Hume suggests that, other things being equal, our sympathy for others is stronger when they are closer, in space, to us.[14] Early in his *Treatise*, Hume claims that we are more likely to associate the ideas of objects that are close in distance, that show "contiguity in . . . place" (1.1.4.1). Later, when discussing sympathy, he writes that "the sentiments of others have little influence, when far remov'd from us, and require the relation of contiguity, to make them communicate themselves entirely" (2.1.11.6). I argue that, when Hume writes about the importance of contiguity to sympathy, he means to emphasize the importance of our ability to see or hear, in detail, each other's facial expressions, gestures, and voices.

To get at this, imagine a science-fiction scenario in which we could, while a great distance apart, communicate with each other by means of very realistic, three-dimensional holograms that look exactly like us, sound like us, and move exactly how and when we do. If Hume were in this imagined scenario, would he say that our physical distance would be a great hindrance to our sympathy? I suspect that Hume would not, since we would nonetheless be able to see each other's gestures and expressions, and hear each other's voices. What matters to sympathy is not the distance, but is rather what typically coincides with distance—namely our access to each other's gestures, expressions, and sounds.

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14. Other factors also determine the strength of sympathy, such as whether people resemble us in "manners, or character, or country, or language" (Hume 2000, 2.1.11.5), and whether they are friends or strangers (2.1.11.2; 2.1.11.17). For the sake of discussion, I focus only on contiguity.

Regardless of what Hume *would* say, this is what he *ought* to say. After all, when he writes about the effect of distance on our ability to sympathize, he emphasizes the effects of distance on our ability to see or hear each other's movements, expressions, and voices. Hume claims that, if we were to see a ship at a great distance, "tost by a tempest, and in danger every moment of perishing" (3.3.2.5), we would not sympathize very strongly, and might even, by comparing the boat's situation with our own, take pleasure in the fact that we are safely on land. But suppose the ship were so close that we could "perceive distinctly the horror, painted on the countenance of the seamen and passengers, hear their lamentable cries, see the dearest friends give their last adieu, or embrace with a resolution to perish in each others arms" (ibid.). Then, we could never "reap any pleasure from such a spectacle" and we would instead be driven to experience the strongest sympathy and "the tenderest compassion" (ibid.). It is not the change in distance—in contiguity—that matters to sympathy; instead, it is the fact that, because the ship is close, we see the passengers' expressions ("horror, painted on the countenance of the seamen"), hear their voices ("lamentable cries,") and watch their gestures ("embrace"). Hume emphasizes kinesthesia. Since sympathy is stronger when we see/hear each other's movements and voices, for Hume the strongest sympathy possible, "sympathy in its full perfection" (2.1.11.8), requires the kinesthesia accompanying contiguity.

I further argue that, since, according to Hume, seeing/hearing each other's expressions, gestures, and voices is necessary for the strongest sympathy, it also makes us much more likely to treat each other with benevolence. This should already be plausible, given Hume's claim about the "tenderest compassion," in the ship example above. Hume also writes that only strong sympathy, rather than weak, always leads us to experience benevolence: "Benevolence, therefore, arises from a great degree of misery, or any degree strongly smpathiz'd with: Hatred or contempt from a small degree or one weakly sympathiz'd with" (2.2.9.15). Since kinesthesia is conducive to strong sympathy, it is also conducive to benevolence as well.

Hume writes that benevolence, the "appetite, which attends love, is a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd, and an aversion to his misery" (2.2.9.3). But Hume also uses the term in a broader sense, referring to the desire of the happiness not only of a loved one, but also of strangers (Vitz 2004, 265; Hume 2000, 2.2.9.5). So we might broadly take "benevolence" as the desire of the happiness of another person. Hume claims that we experience benevolence when we experience strong sympathy for someone's misery, because when we receive

and experience for ourselves that person's passions [sympathy], we cannot help but desire that person's pleasure/happiness [benevolence] (2.2.9.15).[15]

To explain why, for Hume, benevolence can arise from sympathy, we should consider *what*, exactly, is communicated by sympathy, from one person to another. Hume emphasizes passions in his account of sympathy, not just pleasure and pain (Kirby 2003, 309-10).[16] Passions can be communicated by sympathy (Hume 2000, 2.1.11.2 & 2.1.11.8), and when we sympathize, our idea of another person's sentiment becomes, in us, "the very passion itself" (2.1.11.3; Kirby 2003, 310). Hume notes that passions are different from pleasures and pains; passions are what are called "impressions of reflexion" (Hume 2000, 1.1.2.1), while pleasures and pains are impressions of sensation (ibid.; Kirby 2003, 309). Hume implies that sympathy can communicate *any* of the impressions of reflection, including emotions and desires, in addition to passions (ibid., 309-310).[17]

Sometimes, when we sympathize, what we share with, and receive from, the other person is an emotion, passion, or desire, rather than, or in addition to, pains and pleasures. As Barry Stroud suggests, Hume need not say that, when "I sympathize with the child with a bad toothache . . . I actually have a toothache, myself" (Stroud 1977, 197). Rather, we can take Hume to claim that what I sometimes receive from the aching child by sympathy is not the child's pain, but is rather a desire for the child's relief (Kirby 2003, 310). For Hume, just as emotions are contagious, and we can "catch" other people's emotions through sympathy, so too are *desires* contagious as well. Through sympathy, we can come to desire for others what they desire for themselves. When we do, we desire the satisfaction of their desires, we desire their pleasure and happiness, and, thus, we experience benevolence.

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15. Vitz acknowledges that this is one of two ways in which Hume says benevolence arises; we also experience benevolence when we desire the happiness of a person with whom we share common interests, such as a business partner (Vitz 2004, 265; Hume 2000, 2.2.9.7-9).

16. Douglas Chismar claims that pleasure and pain are the "key players" in Hume's account of sympathy (1988-89, 244 in particular), and argues, on this basis, that Hume does not provide sufficient evidence/argument to reasonably conclude that benevolence arises from sympathy. I argue that if we take impressions of reflection as key players in Hume's account, then Hume's arguments about benevolence are straightforward.

17. I do not, for reasons outside of this paper's scope, go as far as Kirby, claiming that sympathy *only* ever communicates impressions of reflection (Kirby 2003; 309-310).

Hume notes that weak sympathy does not always lead to benevolence (and so must not communicate desires like this), but that strong sympathy always does (Hume 2000, 2.2.9.14-15). Hume claims that when we sympathize with someone strongly, we experience "extensive sympathy" (2.2.9.14), sympathizing with the "whole person" (Cunningham 2004, 237), with "all of the circumstances of [a] person, whether past, present, or future" (Hume 2000, 2.2.9.14; Vitz 2004, 267).[18] I will not discuss this further here; it is beyond this paper's scope. The point, for this paper, is to emphasize that, according to Hume, only strong sympathy consistently leads to benevolence. Since, *ceteris paribus*, sympathy is stronger when we experience kinesthesia—when we can see or hear each other's facial expressions, gestures, and voices—it follows that kinesthesia is conducive to benevolence.

I do not mean to suggest that, according to Hume, we cannot experience strong sympathy and benevolence for others without witnessing them in motion or listening to their voices. After all, there are clearly many real-world cases in which people do experience strong sympathetic responses like this, and I do not want to interpret Hume's theory so that it is obviously mistaken. As one real-world example, Sushama Kasbekar describes the responses of individuals who viewed static photos of Aylan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian refugee who, with his brother and mother, drowned as they attempted to travel from Turkey to a Greek island (Kasbekar 2016). After viewing photos that had been widely shared on Twitter and Facebook, those interviewed about them expressed strong sympathetic emotions. Hume's theory can account for these sorts of responses. Hume can consistently maintain that individuals sometimes experience very strong sympathetic responses, even without witnessing others' movements in real-time or listening to their voices. Hume could even say that since the photos presented Aylan as if he were near us, and since some of the photos showed the facial expressions of those who found the boy's body, the photos led people to experience much stronger sympathetic responses than they otherwise would. All Hume or I would need to say, in order to remain consistent, is that while people's sympathetic responses to these static images were very strong and conducive to benevolence, nonetheless, humans are capable of experiencing even stronger and more benevolent sympathetic responses, possibly in very different circumstances, as a result of viewing facial expressions, gestures, and hearing voices. My own contention in this paper is not that our empathetic responses to static images and

18. For a good discussion of limited and extensive sympathy, see Cunningham 2004.

text cannot be strong or benevolent. I will argue only that the empathy we experience in response to them can never be as strong or as conducive to benevolence as the best empathetic responses of which humans are capable.

I grant that it is possible that some people frequently feel stronger empathy and benevolence, as a result of witnessing text and static images, than many other people experience interacting face-to-face. I do not intend to make any claim about how *frequently* in-person interaction leads to greater empathy than witnessing text and static images.

I also grant that it is possible to imagine scenarios in which one person empathizes well with another as a result of reading Facebook posts or email, but would fail to empathize in person. I suspect if Hume were around today, he could make the same sort of claim about sympathy with complete consistency. Further, Hume could also acknowledge that sometimes we can experience great sympathy and benevolence for an individual, such as the man who does not know he is about to be trampled by horses, without having to respond to that individual's gestures or voice, and without feeling what he feels. Still, even though Hume can grant that our sympathetic responses to this individual might be strong, Hume would also insist that, considering all people across all times, the absolute *strongest* instances of sympathy, which are *most* conducive to benevolence, involve in person interaction—gesture, expression, and voice. Hume writes that "we must be assisted by the relations of resemblance and contiguity, in order to feel the sympathy in its full perfection" (2.1.11.8). In order to experience the absolute strongest sympathy of which any human is capable, the sympathy that is truly most conducive to benevolence, we require the kinesthesia that accompanies contiguity.

Finally, it is worth noting that, based on the interpretation provided above, Hume need not say that one must feel the pain of another who is suffering in order to experience the strongest sympathy for that person. As suggested, Hume need not say that one must feel the pain of a toothache, in order to sympathize with someone who does. Bernard Mandeville, who disagrees with Hume, implies that if surgeons were to experience "tenderness" or great sympathy for their patients, they would actually need to empathetically experience their patients' suffering (Mandeville 1724, 101). But if Mandeville were right that great sympathy requires surgeons to empathetically feel their patients' suffering, we might reasonably worry that great sympathy might prevent surgeons, who are overwhelmed by their patients' suffering, from successfully healing their patients. We might worry that sympathy could get in the way of benevolent action, rather

than support it. But, insofar as Hume need not say that surgeons must empathetically feel their patients' suffering in order to experience the strongest sympathy for them, he can avoid this worry, and insist that the strongest sort of sympathy is always conducive to benevolence. To experience the strongest sympathy for patients, the surgeon need only share those patients' desires for their relief.

V. Hume and Martin

Hume and Martin both suggest that if we do not respond to each other with kinesthetic sympathy our interactions would be, at least sometimes, less than ideal. According to Martin, if an audience did not respond to a dance with kinesthetic sympathy, that dance would not be effectual or fulfill its purpose. According to Hume, if we did not, in day-to-day life, respond to each other with kinesthetic sympathy, we would not experience the strongest possible sympathy that is most conducive to benevolence.

I begin this section by reflecting broadly on the strong thematic connections Martin's theory of dance shares with early modern theories of sympathy, including not just Hume's theory but also Adam Smith's.[19] While all three theorists disagree on a variety of points, my discussions of their thematic connections will serve as a backdrop for the key agreements I recognize between Hume and Martin. At the end of this section, I will discuss this agreement, and what it means with respect to my criticism of technology. Ultimately, I argue that, if Hume and Martin are right, then we would not be able to experience the best sort of sympathy while we are communicating via Facebook, text messaging, or email, when we cannot see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, or voices.

While Martin is interested in discussing how audiences respond to dancers, Hume focuses on providing an account of how we sympathize with others on a day-to-day basis. This is a major and important distinction. Nonetheless, according to Hume and other early modern philosophers, we sympathetically respond to each other in everyday life in much the same way that an audience sympathetically responds to a dance. While Hume, himself, does not explicitly mention dance in relation to sympathy, he does imply that we

19. My reflections in this section were broadly influenced by reading Foster 2011, chap. 3, in which she discusses relations between the theories of Martin, Hume, and Smith.

sympathetically respond to each other in day-to-day life in much the same way that a spectator sympathetically responds to performers of a theatrical drama (Hume 1998, 5.23-26;[20] also see Hume 2006, 22). Further, Adam Smith, one of Hume's contemporaries and friends, develops an example of spectators watching and sympathizing with a dancer in order to better articulate how we sympathize with each other in everyday life (Smith 1982, I.I.3).[21] These philosophers suggest that, by better understanding the role that kinesthesia plays with respect to sympathy in dance or theater, we might also better appreciate the role that kinesthesia plays with respect to sympathy in day-to-day life.

The specific conditions of performance—either in a dance or a play—are different from what we experience in day-to-day life and have a strong impact on how audiences respond. Nonetheless, Hume and Smith suggest that the ways in which we sympathetically respond to performance is sufficiently related to how we sympathetically respond to each other in day-to-day life that we can better understand sympathy in everyday life by understanding sympathy in performance. Regardless of whether Hume and Smith are correct about the relevance of sympathy in performance to sympathy in everyday life, since they claim the two are closely related, we might come to better understand their conceptions of sympathy in everyday life by better understanding sympathy in performance. So, there is reason to think that Martin's contentions about sympathy in dance can be viewed meaningfully in relation to Hume's contentions about sympathy in everyday life.

No doubt, Hume's account of kinesthetic sympathy differs from Martin's in a number of significant ways. For example, Martin focuses on cases in which we sympathize by witnessing each other's movements, mimicking them internally or externally, and thus feel the emotions that the other actually feels. In contrast, Hume provides numerous examples of cases in which we feel sympathetic distress for someone who does not feel distress himself and do not mimic that person at all, such as the person who is asleep and about to be trampled by horses. In addition, Hume focuses on the role hearing voices plays in leading individuals to experience kinesthetic sympathy, while the dancers Martin discusses do not speak or sing, and Martin focuses solely on seeing movement.

20. All references to Hume's *Enquiry* are cited by section and paragraph number.

21. All references to Smith's *The Theory* are cited by part, section, chapter (where appropriate), and paragraph.

Further, it is not clear whether Hume would agree with Martin that when we do sympathize with others as a result of witnessing their gestures and expressions, we mimic their behaviors either externally or internally. Foster notes that Smith, in contrast, does imply that we often mimic the behavior of a person with whom we sympathize (Foster 2011, 140). More precisely, Smith suggests that when we sympathize with someone, "by the imagination, we place ourselves in his situation . . . we enter as it were into his body," (Smith 1982, I.I.2), and when we "enter . . . into his body," we sometimes take on some of his behaviors. For example: "When we see a stroke aimed and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or our own arm" (I.I.3). Most strikingly, in a passage that would belong in John Martin's discussion of modern dance, Smith claims that, when spectators sympathetically respond to a dancer performing on a rope, they "naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation" (I.I.3).

It is not obvious that Hume would agree; theorists note that Hume's and Smith's theories of sympathy differ in many respects.[22] Nonetheless, while Hume does not clearly suggest that movement is transferred between people when they sympathize, Hume does *compare* sympathy with the transference of movement. Specifically, he compares the communication and sharing of passions involved in sympathy with the communication and sharing of motion between coiled strings. Describing the "nature" and "force" of sympathy, Hume writes: "As in strings equally wound up, the motion of one communicates itself to the rest; so all the affections readily pass from one person to another, and beget correspondent movements in every human creature" (Hume 2000, 3.3.1.7). It is unclear how far Hume takes this analogy, and whether he would claim, as Martin and Smith do, that we communicate not just our passions, but also our motions to each other, each of us mimicking the actions of those with whom we sympathize.

There are dozens if not hundreds of major distinctions between Hume's theory of sympathy and Martin's—substantial distinctions that go far beyond mere details. But for the sake of this paper, I need not dwell on the differences and disagreements between their theories. Instead, I mean to focus on a few key agreements. As argued earlier, when we recognize that respected theorists from numerous disciplines can all be taken to support certain key claims, we gain greater reason to believe those claims are true, even if those theorists disagree on a

22. For discussions of the differences between Hume's and Smith's accounts of sympathy, see Sayre-McCord 2015 and Hanley 2016.

wide variety of points, including substantial claims directly related to those key claims. And despite their wide array of differences, Hume and Martin are, at least broadly speaking, in agreement on claims that are most relevant to this paper.

While Adam Smith's theory of sympathy might, in many ways, be a better fit for Martin's theory than Hume's, only a few agreements between theories actually matter for the sake of this paper's argument, overall. Hume, more so than Smith, draws clear relations between the notions of kinesthesia, sympathy, and benevolence, and Hume's theory more clearly suggests that we must see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, and voices in order to experience the kind of strong sympathy that is best and most conducive to benevolence. So too, Hume and Martin, more clearly than Smith, agree on this: If we did not respond to each other with kinesthetic sympathy, our interactions would sometimes be less than ideal. This common agreement, on which Smith is less clear, is central to this paper, overall. We can recognize that Hume and Martin agree on this, even while we note that they disagree on many other points, including the role that hearing each other's voices has on our experiences of kinesthetic sympathy.

Ultimately, this paper offers a critique of technology—particularly Facebook, email, and text messaging. If Martin and Hume are right about the value of kinesthetic sympathy, and if their claims about sympathy apply to what we call "empathy," then when we use Facebook, email, or text messaging, we cannot have the best possible sorts of interactions with one another. After all, when we use Facebook, email, or text messaging, we typically do not have access to each other's gestures, expressions, or voices. If Hume *in particular* is correct, and his claims apply to empathy, then while we are reading text on Facebook, we cannot experience the strongest empathy of which humans are capable, which is most conducive to benevolence.

I have shown that, if Hume is right, then in order to experience the strongest empathy that is most conducive to benevolence, we must see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, or movements. Facebook and email lack sufficient paralinguistic and non-verbal cues like this. Thus, if Hume is right, while we use Facebook, text messaging, or email to communicate, we do not experience the strongest empathy that is most conducive to benevolence. Since I take for granted that it is morally good to be someone who experiences benevolence—and I see no need to defend this claim—I further contend that, if Hume is right, then while we use Facebook, text messaging, or email to communicate, we do not experience the *best* empathy, in a normative sense. If

Hume is correct, then while we us Facebook or email to communicate, we are likely to fall short of a moral ideal.

As of now, my conclusion is purely conditional. It only follows that we do not experience the best empathy while using Facebook *if Hume is right*. As yet, I have not provided sufficient evidence that Hume is actually correct. So far, I have shown that Borgmann, Martin, and Hume can all be taken to agree, at least on the claim that seeing and hearing each other's gestures, expressions, and voices is key, at least sometimes, for having the best interactions. But this is, as yet, not real justification for thinking that Hume's specific claims about the relations between empathy, kinesthesia, and benevolence are correct. To provide greater evidence, I will turn to work from psychology and neuroscience. At the end of this paper, I will spell out my argument in full, articulating my critique of technology.

VI. Psychology/Neuroscience, Marco Iacoboni

In the next two sections, I illustrate that theories of kinesthetic empathy expressed by Martin and Hume fit together into a compelling picture, both with each other and with research performed by psychologists and neuroscientists. As suggested earlier, I maintain that since these theories fit together as well as they do into such an attractive picture, we have good reason to think that they might be correct about the claims on which they commonly agree. In particular, I take the work of many psychologists and neuroscientists, collectively if not each alone, to support Hume's contention that, to experience the best sort of empathy on which humans are capable, we must see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, and voices. I do not provide a comprehensive review of relevant psychological or neuroscientific literature. As I implied in part II, it is more important for this article to have broad scope, considering theorists across disciplines, than it is for it to provide great detail about any particular discipline.

In this section, I focus on studies suggesting that often when we empathize with others we observe their behavior and then mimic it ourselves, either overtly, with our own bodily behavior, or internally, at the neural level, through a kind of inner mimicry. I also reflect on possible connections between these studies and what Hume calls "benevolence."

Psychologists Chartrand and Bargh performed experiments focusing on what they call the "Chameleon Effect," namely our tendency to overtly and non-consciously mimic the "postures, mannerisms, facial expressions, and other behaviors" of our interaction partners (Chartrand and Bargh 1999, 893). In one

experiment, participants interacted in a task unrelated to the study (describing photographs), with an unknown confederate, who deliberately "either rubbed his or her face or shook his or her foot" (897), and who either had a neutral facial expression or smiled. Chartrand and Bargh discovered that participants smiled more times per minute with a confederate who smiled, shook their foot more times with a foot-shaker, and rubbed their faces more with a face-rubber (899). The mimicry was non-conscious; when asked, none of the participants mentioned noticing the confederates' unusual behavior (900). This result could be put, metaphorically, in the language of Martin's dance theory: "Movement is transferred in effect by kinesthetic sympathy to the muscles of the spectator" (Martin 1965b, 8).

In another experiment, the confederate did not mimic the gesture and postures of participants, but instead *both* rubbed his/her face and shook his/her foot (Chartrand and Bargh 1999, 905). After interacting with the confederate, participants completed Davis's (1980) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), a questionnaire that measures perspective-taking and emotional concern for others (Chatrand and Bargh 1999, 904). Chartrand and Bargh were particularly interested in the IRI's perspective-taking subscale, which assesses cognitive empathy—participants' tendency to adopt others' point of view—and includes items such as, "When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to 'put myself in his/her shoes'" (904). Chartrand and Bargh discovered that high-perspective takers shook their feet and rubbed their faces more times per minute (905). This supports the idea that, the greater someone's cognitive empathy, the more that person overtly mimics others' behaviors. This also seems to support Adam Smith's contention that when we sympathize with someone, "we place ourselves in his situation . . . we enter as it were into his body," (Smith 1982, I.I.2), and when we do, we often take on some of his behaviors.

Some dance theorists suggest that studies from neuroscience—particularly studies of so-called "mirror neurons"—can also provide evidence for John Martin's theory of "*inner* mimicry" (Reynolds and Reason 2012, 19; Foster 2008, 54-55), which connects kinesthetic empathy to our tendency to internally mimic others in a way that is not externally visible (Martin 1965a, 19 & 23). I, myself, do not mean to imply that discussions of inner mimicry or mirror neurons should play a key role in philosophical theories of what theorists call "dance understanding" or "dance appreciation."[23] I contend only that, at a strictly

23. For discussions of how inner mimicry and discussions of neurology do or do not relate to dance appreciation and understanding, see Davies 2013 and McFee 2013.

physical, neurological level, there is evidence that many people do internally mimic the movements of the dancers they watch, and this kind of mimicry is relevant to the implementation of empathy.

Marco Iacoboni notes that recent studies linking empathic behavior and brain activity are inspired by the discovery of "mirror neurons" in the brains of macaque monkeys (Iacoboni 2011, 45). Reflecting on past experiments, neuroscientists note that certain neurons in a monkey's brain discharge both when the monkey performs a specific, purposeful, goal-related action, and also when, sitting still, it watches another individual perform the same goal-related action (45-47; Gallese 2001, 35; Rizzolati and Sinigagli 2010, 264). This includes a variety of actions such as biting, kicking (Iacoboni 2011, 48; Gallese 2001, 38), and hand grasping, and different, overlapping sets of neurons discharge when a monkey performs/watches a precision grip, finger prehension, or hand prehension (Iacoboni 2011, 46; Gallese 2001, 36).

These neuroscientists note that there is evidence that humans, too, have mirror neurons (Iacoboni 2011, 50), or at least, broadly, the same sort of "neural system matching observation and execution" (Gallese 2001, 37; Rizzolati and Sinigagli 2010, 265; Pfeifer et al. 2008, 2076). Certain ensembles of neurons are activated both when we perform goal-oriented actions and when we witness others performing them (Iacoboni 2011, 48-49; Gallese 2001, 37). Even when sitting still, when we observe actions, our motor system becomes active *as if* we are performing the actions, ourselves. When we watch a dance, we really do dance along internally, as Martin suggests (Martin 1965a, 23).

Our neural mirror system seems to be key to empathy. In one study, performed by Carr et al., participants observed pictures of faces, or segments of faces, with various expressions: "happy, sad, angry, surprise, disgust, and afraid" (Carr et al. 2003, 5498). Participants were told either to "imitate and internally generate the target emotion . . . or simply observe" (ibid.), and measurements were taken, measuring their brain activity. Carr et al. found that substantially similar neural networks were activated both by observing and imitating (5498), including in mirror areas (5500-1), although there was greater activity during imitation (5498). Additionally, both when observing and when imitating, the amygdala, in the limbic area, which is "a critical structure in emotional behaviors" (5501) was activated, though with increased activity when participants actively imitated emotions. Iacoboni sees this study as evidence that mirror neurons "support the simulation of facial expressions" (Iacoboni 2009, 665), which triggers activity in the limbic area, leading us to feel what others are feeling (ibid.; Iacoboni

2011, 50). Taking empathy as "feeling what one takes another person to be feeling" (Prinz 2011, 212), it seems to follow that mimicry of facial expressions—both external/bodily and internal/mirror-neuron—supports empathy.

While Hume never clearly discusses mimicry like this, this study and Iacoboni's reflections on it seem to "fit" with the contention I have attributed to Hume, that we must observe other peoples' gestures, facial expressions, etc. in order to best sympathize with them. Perhaps we could take studies like this to help explain why Hume might be correct. Insofar as we must observe each other's gestures and expressions in order to mimic them, and insofar as mimicry supports empathy, so too, observing each other's behavior plays a key role with empathy.

In a different experiment performed by Pfeifer et al., after observing or imitating facial expressions the participants—children—completed a modified version of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), measuring several aspects of empathy, including empathic concern, with items such as, "Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems" (Pfeifer et al. 2009, 2078). Pfeifer et al. found that the greater the child's empathic tendencies, as measured by the modified IRI, the greater the activity in mirror neuron areas while either observing or imitating facial expressions (2080-1). Significant correlations were also observed between empathy and activity in the amygdala and right insula, an area involved in "internal representation of subjective feeling states" (2081). So Pfeifer et al. suggest that "neural mirroring of emotions displayed by others may play an important role in allowing us . . . to feel what others feel" (2081-2). Reflecting on this study, along with "Chameleon Effect" experiments, neuroscientists posit a connection between empathy and the mimicry, both externally/bodily and internally/neurally, of others' behavior (for example: Iacoboni 2011).

Additional studies "fit" with Hume's contention that when we strongly sympathize with others, we experience benevolence toward them. In one study, performed by Trobst et al., participants who completed the IRI were told "to imagine that a specific person among their friends had become an alcoholic" (Trobst et al. 1994, 49). After being given a detailed description of the friend's serious and ongoing problem, participants were asked to indicate how supportive they would be. Participants indicated "how much of their time they would use in helping," "how far out of their way they would go" (50), etc. Trobst et al. found that participants with greater dispositional empathy, as measured by the IRI, tended to predict giving a substantially greater level of support (51). In a different study, Batson et al. focused on participants each of who, observing a stranger in

need over what was thought to be a closed-circuit television (Batson et al. 1983, 710), was given the option either to leave the study or to help the stranger in a way that would cause the participant a little discomfort (714). Among these participants, those who were empathetic, claiming on a questionnaire that watching the stranger made them feel substantially "sympathetic, moved, and compassionate" (711), were substantially more likely to help the stranger than those who were predominately distressed (714), whose answers revealed they were more "alarmed, grieved," etc. than sympathetic (711).

In total, these studies suggest that observing and mimicking each other's gestures and expressions, either bodily/externally or neurally/internally, play an important role in empathy, which itself is conducive to benevolence. While the studies do not offer decisive evidence that Hume is correct, and that we must see and hear each other's gestures, expressions, and voices in order to experience the best empathy of which humans are capable, these studies nonetheless seem to "fit" a compelling bigger picture in which Hume's contention is true.

VII. Psychology/Neuroscience, Justin Kruger[24]

David Hume emphasizes not only the importance to sympathy of witnessing gestures and expressions, but also the importance of listening to each other's voices. Here I reflect on studies, directly related to communicating via email or text messaging, which specifically highlight the importance of verbal cues, such as intonation and tone. As suggested earlier, communication on Facebook often involves only words and static images, while communication face-to-face, or even on the phone, can be a more unified experience, including a wide variety of cues. While the studies I consider here do not directly relate to empathy, I argue that these studies demonstrate the *kinds* of results we should find, if Hume is correct that, to experience the best empathy of which humans are capable, we must see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, and voices.

Kruger et al. performed studies suggesting that individuals are significantly better at communicating emotions and tones using their voice than they are using email (Kruger et al. 2005). In one experiment, participants constructed one-sentence statements, trying to communicate particular emotions/tones, about various topics such as music and football. These individuals then either emailed or

24. The book *Yes!* by Goldstein et al. gathers a number of this section's sources together and briefly summarizes them (Goldstein et al. 2008).

spoke their statements, one at a time, without context, to either a friend or stranger. Kruger et al. discovered that individuals were significantly better at successfully communicating emotions/tones when they spoke (928), and that individuals who emailed were far more overconfident about their ability to successfully communicate (929).

Further, Kruger et al. noted that it made no significant difference if those communicating identified as friends or strangers; there was no significant difference in either how well they communicated their emotions/tones or how overconfident they were (930 & 934). No doubt, friends do communicate via email differently from strangers, and sometimes more successfully. For example, McGinn & Keros (2002) performed studies demonstrating that when conducting some negotiations over email, friends behave more cooperatively than strangers, and are more likely both to strike a deal and to strike a deal that benefits both more equitably.[25] But Kruger et al.'s work nonetheless suggests that even friends are limited in some ways when they communicate via email.

In a different study, Epley and Kruger looked at the effects of expectations and stereotypes on email communications (Epley and Kruger 2005). Participants received what they were told were pictures and descriptions of a man they would interview (416). Many received a picture and description of a football player with a 2.30 GPA. The participants subsequently asked an interviewee pre-determined interview questions, either by phone or email. All participants, regardless of the pictures they received or whether they communicated via email or phone, received answers worded identically; the content of the responses was the same. Epley and Kruger compared those who interviewed the football player via email to those who had interviewed the player via phone, and found that those in the email condition were significantly more likely to rate the interviewee as being particularly "inarticulate," "uninformed," and/or "dumb," even after the interview took place (ibid). Epley and Kruger suggest that, during a phone call, non-verbal and paralinguistic cues alter participants' impressions in a way that email does not. I take these experiments to suggest that we often need these cues in order to treat each other as "whole people," rather than on the basis of stereotypes or expectations.

25. Also see Nadler and Shestowsky (2006) for a discussion of the work of McGinn and Keros (2002) in relation to a broad discussion of how people who view each other either as familiar or as strangers negotiate using email and information technology more broadly.

Morris et al. performed studies comparing pairs of strangers who communicated solely via email to pairs who communicated via email after speaking briefly on the phone (Morris et al. 2002). Each pair had to complete a negotiation solely by email, but some of the pairs also received black-and-white photographs of each other, and had the opportunity to speak on the phone for five minutes prior to negotiations, about topics unrelated to negotiation. Following a week of email negotiations, individuals who had the chance to "schmooze" on the phone "reported significantly higher feelings of rapport" (95) and judged each other to be significantly more cooperative, open, and positive (96). As Morris et al. point out, it is striking how significant and engaging a five-minute phone conversation can be; even after a week of negotiations, it still had a significant effect on the outcome (99). Additionally, while the content of negotiation emails wasn't restricted, the researchers ascertained that those involved in email negotiations did not "schmooze" as much as people who speak face-to-face; in email, people tended to disclose only one-third as much about non-negotiation issues (91).

These studies in no way *prove* what I mean for this article to conclude, that when we communicate with others on Facebook, email, or online chats, we do not experience the best sort of empathy of which humans are capable. Nonetheless, these studies do seem to converge on this point with earlier discussions. Grant that imitation of each other's paralinguistic and non-verbal cues, either overtly or at the neurological level of mirror neurons, is important to empathy, and also to communicating our emotions with each other. Then it seems natural that, when we are on the Internet without these cues, we would face the kind of limitations described above. I know of no strong, demonstrated link between these "technology" studies and neuroscientific studies of empathy. Nonetheless, these "technology" studies do seem to "fit" alongside those neuroscientific studies, in addition to Hume's contention that without paralinguistic and non-verbal cues, we cannot experience the best empathy which is conducive to benevolence.

VIII. The Argument Overall

Earlier, I argued that if Hume is correct and his claims about sympathy apply to what we call "empathy," then it would follow that, while we are using Facebook, email, and text messaging, we typically do not experience the best of empathy that is most conducive to benevolence. Now I have provided reason to think that Hume is actually correct, by showing that the work of respected theorists from

numerous disciplines support Hume's contention, or at least "fit" together into a compelling bigger picture in which that contention is true. As suggested earlier, while this does not provide any solid proof that Hume's contention is correct, it does give us greater reason to believe that it is. Having defended this contention, this paper's central argument can now be understood to proceed as follows:

(1) If Hume is correct and what he says about sympathy applies to empathy, then to experience the best empathy of which humans are capable, we must see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, and voices.

(2) Hume is correct and what he says about sympathy applies to empathy.

(3) While we are using Facebook, email, or text messaging, we typically cannot see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, and voices.

(4) The best empathy of which humans are capable is the kind of empathy that is most conducive to benevolence.

(5) Therefore, while we are using Facebook, email, or text messaging, we do not experience the kind of empathy that is most conducive to benevolence.

From premises (1) and (2), we can derive the claim that whenever we do not see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, and voices, we do not experience the best empathy. This is a broad, universal claim that is not in any way particular to Facebook, email, or any specific form of communication at all. To provide reason to think that this universal claim is true, I do not need to perform careful analyses and comparisons of relevant forms of communication such as Facebook, text messaging, or email. Instead, I appeal to the fact that numerous theories from different disciplines offer support for it. Once we believe that this universal claim is true, we can arrive at a conclusion about a number of particulars, such as Facebook, text messaging, and email. Since we do not see or hear each other when we use these forms of communication, it must follow that we do not experience the best empathy when we are using them. My argument is top-down, rather than bottom-up. It establishes a universal claim and then uses that claim to arrive at a conclusion about particulars, rather than analyzing particulars in order to establish a claim about universals.

No doubt, careful analysis would show that Facebook, text messaging, and email are also dissimilar in myriad ways, and that the ways each is used differs across cultural contexts. Yet, to arrive at my paper's conclusions, I need not focus on how technology is used in these different contexts. By appealing to the agreement and fit between theories from different disciplines, I provide greater reason to believe the broad, sweeping claim that—regardless of context—whenever we do not see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, or voices we do not experience the best empathy. So too, I provide greater reason to believe that, no matter people's cultural context and no matter if they communicate via Facebook, email, or text messaging, if the form of communication they employ does not let them see or hear others' gestures, expressions or voices, they also will not experience the best empathy. My contention that Facebook, email, and text messaging all share a common limitation in no way suggests that these forms of communication are similar in every respect, and are not also varying expressions of different societies.

Also, it is worth noting that my argument criticizes only online communication that blocks kinesthesia, preventing us from seeing or hearing each other's gestures, expressions, and voices. I do not criticize audio recordings, webcams, or videos.

In the argument, I never claim that to experience the best empathy of which humans are capable, we must have the same experiences or emotions as the person with whom we empathize. To the contrary, I suggested, earlier, that sometimes it might be sufficient to share some of the same desires with another person, without sharing that person's particular emotions. Rather, I have argued that, in order to experience the best empathy of which humans are capable, we must see or hear each other's gestures, expressions, and voices. I have provided substantial evidence that humans are "wired" to respond to a unified experience of facial expressions, movements, gestures, vocal tone, and intonation.

Finally, I am perfectly content to allow that someone who communicates via Facebook or email in the morning might, later in the day, go on to experience the best kind of empathy of which humans are capable. I have provided no argument about long-term effects, but have instead only argued that we do not experience the best kind of empathy *while we are using* Facebook, email, or text messaging.

I have provided a moral critique of Facebook, email, and text messaging. At least during those times in which we use them, we fall short of the best sorts of empathetic interactions of which humans are capable. While we use them, we do

not experience the strongest empathy that is most conducive to benevolence, and since it is morally good to be benevolent, we have also not experienced the empathy that is most conducive to this morally good trait. It is not that our interactions on Facebook, email, and text messaging are *bad*; in fact, while we use them we can be both empathetic and benevolent. It is just that when we use them, we fall short of the ideal.

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