Book Review

Héctor Andrés Sánchez Guerrero: *Feelings of Being Together and Caring with One Another: A Contribution to the Debate on Collective Affective Intentionality*. Cham: Springer, 2016, 283 pp.

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How is it possible for two or more individuals to share emotions? More specifically, how is it possible to share emotional episodes such that the participating individuals' "feeling together" is not merely a matter of feeling the same emotion towards the same object or event *alongside* each other? What account of emotion and collectivity do we have to presuppose to allow for such a strong, non-metaphorical sense of affective sharing? And is there some specific, i.e. not so much psychological or onto- or phylogenetically developed, but rather genuinely existential ability built into our very social fabric, our being-together with others, that makes us capable to actualize such episodes of feeling-together? In *Feeling Together and Caring with One Another* Sánchez Guerrero sets out to address these questions head-on.

In the past few years, there has been a rapidly growing interest among sociologists, social psychologists, political scientists and philosophers to account for such diverse affective phenomena as emotional contagion, affective entrainment, collective effervescence, intergroup or group-based emotions, or political emotions, sometimes subsumed under the heading of "collective emotions." But Sánchez Guerrero's study is not only the first monographic philosophical study on the topic; moreover, and even in the face of the increasing philosophical sophistication in accounting for the nature of collective emotions, it represents the most sustained and thorough, and I wish to add, one of the most convincing accounts. In subtle and intricate, at times technical and difficult but always fully transparent and clearly motivated argumentative moves, it masterly steers a middle way between the Scylla of all-too loosely-knit emotional alignment and the Charybdis, or the "spectre," of an emergent, supra-individual or any sort of robust group "emoter."

The conceptual framework of the book builds upon the recent, so far predominantly analytic debates on collective intentionality (and esp. on the work of Margaret Gilbert, John Searle and Michael Bratman), and the rich body of work in, again broadly analytic, philosophy of emotions (esp. Peter Goldie, Robert

Roberts and Bennett Helm). At the same time, the account is firmly embedded in the phenomenological tradition, critically and thoroughly engaging with both classical (esp. Max Scheler and Gerda Walther) and contemporary phenomenological thinking about affective sharing, and ultimately endorses a distinctively Heideggerian perspective. This indeed seemingly effortless bridging the much-cited analytic/continental-divide evidenced in the book is not only a generally laudable project but particularly commendable given the enormous conceptual resources in *both* traditions for accounting for the phenomenon at issue.

As the subtitle already indicates, the author defends the affective-intentionality account of emotions. This is arguably not only the most plausible contemporary account of emotions, which also becomes clear from Sánchez Guerrero's well-informed critical discussion of competing historical and contemporary theories of emotions, notably Jamesian or Neo-Jamesian so-called "feeling theories," on the one hand, and cognitivist accounts, on the other (Chapter 2). Moreover, this conception is most akin to early and contemporary phenomenological accounts of the intentionality of emotions (e.g. Scheler's or Hans Bernhard Schmid's), and particularly suited for applying it to collective emotions. This conception was first introduced by Goldie, who stresses both the affective and intentional, world-directed feature of emotions and characterizes them as "feeling-towards." The basic idea underlying Sánchez Guerrero's slightly adapted version is that emotions are "evaluative responses to particular situations" (p. 32ff.), situations that are "feelingly" (and not just cognitively) understood as "meriting a certain response." Importantly, this notion of affective response, most systematically developed by Bennett Helm, is an essentially normative notion. Our emotions, qua responses to situations that *merit* specific evaluations, can respond to such affective "call" or "pull" either appropriately or inappropriately. Accordingly, our emotions can be warranted or unwarranted (p. 40ff.). Below, I will come back to this issue of normativity.

Bringing this notion of affective intentionality directly to bear on collective emotions, and accommodating both the affective and intentional dimension of emotions, the central claim of the study is that "collective affective intentionality is a matter of joint actualizations of our human faculty to feel-towards together" (p. 98). More specifically, and in terms of a cognitively undemanding sense of "felt understanding," episodes of collective affective intentionality (CAI) necessarily involve a "common," "pre-thematic" background or understanding of the participating individuals, who "see themselves as standing in a particular relation to one another" (p. 95), and in particular, as affectively responding together to the given affective demands of the world (p. 102). Sánchez Guerrero aims, and indeed succeeds, to account for the *phenomenological* character of this understanding, which, minimally, entails that the participants not just understand

but precisely feelingly understand, or experience, actual instances of this sharedness. Notice, however, that he explicitly rejects the idea that we find, e.g. in Schmid's otherwise congenial account (cf. Chapter 4), that the intentional act of individuals' jointly actualizing their capacity to feel-towards would amount to an "experiential state," that is realized as one single (token-identical) state across those individuals. Yet, in order to account for a robust sense of sharedness, something must in fact be integrated into a "single fact;" but this is not any mental or psychological *state*, but the joint actualization of the felt understanding and eventually the joint affective *response* (p. 118).

At this stage of the argument, two central questions arise: First, what intentional component exactly in a shared evaluative response is it that guarantees such a robust integration into a single fact? Is it, as it seems most naturally to assume, the sharedness or identity of the evaluative target, i.e. the object that the respective emotions are ("feelingly") directed at? Secondly, and relatedly, what kinds of groups are capable of such integration, or how should we conceive of collectives instantiating such joint affective response? Put differently, does strong affective integration result in some "phenomenological fusion" of the participating individuals (à la Schmid), or do we even have to presuppose some robust supra-individual group "emoter," or a "plural subject" (à la Gilbert) for the constitution of what Sánchez Guerrero calls "affective intentional communities"?

The strength of the argument of the present book lies in the critical stance to such strategies, while still accounting for a strong notion of affective integration. Sánchez Guerrero rejects both the view that CAI entails a token-identical emotional experience and that in CAI participants must share the same *type* of emotion. Participants' emotions need not necessarily phenomenologically "match." But what is more, they need not even be of the same *type*. According to the account of emotions that Sánchez Guerrero defends, (types of) emotions are individuated by their focus, i.e. the determinate property of the intentional object that a given emotion discloses as affectively significant for the subject and ultimately warrants the emotion. The focus and the object or target of emotions need not coincide. My worry that you put a dent into the chrome-frame of my vintage bike by making an accident, and my furious anger at the bicycle-handicraftsman, who, by utterly careless handling, did damage the frame, have different objects and are different types of emotions (viz. worry regarding your inexperienced riding skills, anger with the experienced handicraftsman's carelessness). But my emotional focus is identical here (the import that the flawlessness of my chrome-frame has for me). Now, probably the boldest claim of the book is that neither the object nor even the focus need to coincide across participants in CAI. They can very well engage in CAI, even though one participant, say the conductor of an orchestra, feels a strong (collective) pride at the successful opening concert,

while the first violinist only feels a mild (collective) satisfaction and the oboist ravishes in collective joy (cf. p. 120ff.).

Just what is it then that constitutes the shared evaluative perspective of the affective community in such cases? Sánchez Guerrero's reply is that rather than the specific affective response to a specific affective target across participants – i.e. rather than the shared emotional focus – it is "the fact that we […] already take ourselves to, together with the relevant others, constitute some group when we emotionally respond to a particular occurrence" (p. 12). But ultimately this is precisely not due to the convergence of the focus that picks out the particular occurrence as an occurrence of a shared concern, but "to the capacity to understand one's emotional response as a constitutive part of *our* response" (ibid.). One's particular emotional response thus needs neither phenomenologically (e.g. in its intensity, duration, experiential qualities, whatever these may exactly be) nor intentionally (viz. in its specific intentional focus) converge with those of others in order to be integrated into an – affectively and intentionally unified – community. All that is needed is one's felt understanding of having actualized an emotional response that is not just my but part of *our* response. Put somewhat differently, it is sufficient that the participants' *individual* simultaneous emotional responses of different emotional types are such that they are feeling together that the event in question (e.g. the successful concert) matters *to them*, or that their respective emotions disclose the fact that the event has an affective value for the group that they are part of (the orchestra) and that they, in turn, *care* about. Consider that in such cases we do not have an instance of a properly speaking "shared emotion" (since, recall, emotions are individuated by their focus) (p. 121); yet, we still have an episode of CAI.

With the conception of a group that one "cares" about, we arrive at the second core issue mentioned above, namely of how to conceive of groups instantiating CAI. Here, the studies' well-taken metaphysically deflationary move as well as its existential credentials come into play. Thus, Sánchez Guerrero's rightly argues that we do not need to solve any "particular *metaphysical* problem" regarding the question of a particular supra-individual entity, to which the relevant affective experiences would be attributed. In other words, we can have proper instances of CAI without assuming a group conceived of as the proper bearer or subject of those instances (cf. p. 113, 118f.), to wit, without succumbing to an individualistic or summative view. But even more interestingly and probably more contentiously, Sánchez Guerrero proposes an intricate, existential bedrock for the constitution of the right sort of groups. This Heideggerian move in the argument of the book comes to the fore only by going beyond the thematic focus on affective sharing as such, namely by looking at the existential-ontological fact that humans are capable of engaging in affective intentional communities in the first place,

however transient or robust these communities might be. Thus, the author argues that the very possibility of affective togetherness discloses not just something about our *emotional* abilities, and specifically about our ability to feel together, but a more general "essential character of our human nature," namely that "we are beings that can (and often do) *exist as some particular group we (together with certain others) constitute*" (p. 201).

This idea is cashed out in terms of Heidegger's notions of Dasein's being-with (*Mitsein*) and being-with-one-another (*Miteinandersein*) in a common and "essentially shareable world," and Matthew Ratcliffe's Heidegger-inspired notion of "pre-intentional, existential feelings" (Chapter 6). The claim is that our existential feeling of "being-*together*-in-the-same-world" enables us to "situation-specific" instances of CAI (p. 168). In a further step, based on a reconstruction of Heidegger's notion of care (*Sorge*) as a specific form of "*caring together about something*" (Chapters 6, 7), Sánchez Guerrero argues that in CAI participants take themselves "immediately" and "experientially" to constitute a group "for-the-sake-of-which" and "on behalf of which" they care for when they individually and often qualitatively differently emotionally respond to a particular event or object (p. 173). *Pace* Heidegger, what we care about in such instances is not our own existence but the "well-being" and "flourishing" of our group (cf. p. 181, 224, 260).

On the face of it, this seems not right. After all, why should *every* instance of affective sharing involve caring for the flourishing of the respective affective community, especially in cases when this community, as Sánchez Guerrero readily acknowledges, may just last for an hour or so (cf. Chapter 8.3). Why should I, say, care for the *flourishing* of the randomly met group of hikers, even if I care *together* with the other hikers for the group's safety in the face of a snowstorm? Elaborating on the Heideggerian notion of "existential possibilities" (Chapter 8.3), Sánchez Guerrero argues that the reason is that if I respond "in an authentically affective and genuinely joint manner" to the event at issue I "immediately" (pre-intentionally) affectively understand my own existentially possibility as a "shared possibility," or as the *group's own* possibility (p. 260). No matter how temporary the group with whom I have a concern-based "sense-of-togetherness" is (Chapter 6), if I authentically share its concerns, I have a sense that I *am* that group. It is this sense of togetherness that "ultimately permits [us] to emotionally respond to certain occurrences in a genuinely joint manner" (ibid.).

But with these notions of authenticity and sense of togetherness and with the issue of the robustness of the affective intentional communities we arrive at the crucial challenges and some desiderata of the book. To begin with, consider the notion of authenticity and its connection to the somewhat underexplored issue of the normativity of collective emotions, their being subject to norms of

appropriateness and justification. To be sure, the book does engage with the issue of normativity in the individual case sufficiently (Chapters 2, 5) and also offers thorough critical and yet sympathetic analyses of Gilbert's joint commitment view of collective emotions throughout the book (Chapters 3, 4, 8.2). However, and even though it explicitly aims to accommodate not just the affective-*cum*-intentional but also the normative nature of CAI, some more argument to understand potential disruptions of feeling together (for a brief discussion see p. 171) or the normative unwarrantedness of instances of CAI would have been advisable, both with regard to their intentional targets and the "normative character of the [affective; T.S.] ties between the individuals involved" (p. 98). What is *normatively* required of individuals' evaluative responses to be part of their group's response, and what is required of the shared evaluative response to be an appropriate and an appropriately shared evaluative response to the particular worldly object or event? As none of these requirements are sufficiently explained by reference to Gilbert-style joint commitments to feel as one, what is it then: authenticity of (individual and collective) emotions, or the endorsement of one's own existential possibilities as that of the group? Here, some readers might have welcomed more in-depth discussions of the nature and role of norms of feeling together and in particular in relation to the notion of authenticity (cf., on this, also Fn. 2, p. 202).

In this connection, one might have also wished for more discussion of whether and how the diachronic or institutionalized robustness of affective communities might modulate the engagement in particular episodes of CAI. For example, it seems plausible that habitualization of shared evaluative responses often sediments itself (e.g. in rituals) in a way that even if there is no immediate care for the flourishing or any direct joint commitment at play those habitualized shared evaluative responses might still exert strong affective and normative powers and result in a strong feeling of obligation for the maintenance of the shared perspective.

Finally, and again relatedly, though the author repeatedly addresses the notorious problem of circularity regarding individuals' "immediate" sense or feeling of togetherness, which is supposed to be constitutive for understanding themselves as members of an affective *community*, and their actualization in instances of feeling-towards together (cf. 136f., 230ff., 242, 266), the author, in my view, cannot fully disperse the worry. The problem is not so much a methodological one but rather has to do with the fact that the author does not sufficiently clearly explains the difference between a "minimal feeling of being (a member of) a group" (Chapter 8.2), i.e. "the basic sense to the effect that one co-constitutes a particular group," on the one hand, and the (more robust?) "sense that one's emotional response is part of *our* emotional response – the sense that one is participating in an episode of collective affective intentionality" (p. 231; cf. also p. 242f.), on the other hand.

These critical remarks, however, should in no way deflect from the numerous merits of the book; it is absolutely essential and indeed highly rewarding reading for anybody, students and experts alike, interested in the intriguing debate on affective sharing.