

### **'We-emotion' – the promise and problem of a conception**

In theories of collective intentionality, the notion of We-states belongs to the common conceptual currency. The notion 'We-state' is supposed to denote intentional states that are essentially collective in one or another specific sense. While contemporary theories of collective intentionality mainly deal with We-states in the conative and cognitive realm of intentionality, early phenomenologists developed various accounts of We-emotionality. The strongest conception in this field is the conception of one determinate emotional experience, shareable by  $n$  individuals that not only experience the emotion in the personal mode of 'We' but also aggregate their individual intentional authorships into one collective subject denoted by 'We'. Some of these ideas have been revived in the frame of new phenomenology and emotion theory. The strong theoretical value of the conception of We-emotionality lies in its accounting for the phenomenality of many experiences in an intuitively plausible way.

My paper aims at pointing out a couple of problems that inhere in the notion of We-emotion despite its uncontested theoretical potential. The origins of these problems are located in the use of the highly functional term 'we' for the purpose of distinguishing a certain mode or type or quality of feeling from other modes or types or qualities. The main problem is that a semantically empty concept's indexical nature is stripped off and replaced by the nominal function of denoting a class of properties. The difficulty encountered is not only reification in the strong sense, but also the fact that nominalization allows truth-value (or at least appropriateness) assessment of objective We-emotion attributions of the form: 'They We-feel E'. I take it that the theoretical potential of the notion 'We-emotion' can be preserved only if the logical properties of the indexical 'we' are respected. This implies 1) that the truth-value of objective We-emotion attributions depends on the correctness of subjective attributions of the form 'We feel E', and 2) that the correctness of subjective attributions is utterly ambiguous due to the inherent referential ambiguity of the deictical pronoun 'we'. Assuming systematic relations between explicit self-attributions of intentional states and their subjective experience, I presume that the referential ambiguities of We-attributions mirror an inherent indeterminacy of emotional experience. Disambiguation of this intrinsic indeterminacy must recur to the actual situational parameters of individuals' *de re* relatedness in emotional experience. Modeling relevant situational settings that favor the obtaining of determinate emotional sharing may provide schematic threshold values for paradigmatic cases of We-feeling in the strong sense of determinate emotional sharing. It cannot provide, however, sufficient criteria to clearly discriminate what I will call 'aggregate sharing' of an emotion determinate from mere 'distributive sharing' of an emotion determinate. I therefore conclude that the conception of We-emotionality in terms of determinate emotional sharing is, although plausible, not conceptually compelling.