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Compassion and Sympathy
as Moral Motivation

Steven Sverdlik

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Compassion and Sympathy as Moral Motivation

Moral philosophy has long taken an interest in the emotions. Ever since Plato's defense of the primacy of reason as a source of motivation, moral philosophers have debated the proper role of emotion in the character of a good person and in the choice of individual actions. There are striking contrasts that can be drawn among the main traditions in moral philosophy as to the role they assign to the emotions, and to the particular emotions that they evaluate positively and negatively.

Here are some examples. Utilitarianism is often presented as a theory which simply articulates an ideal of sympathy, where the morally right action is the one that would be favored by someone who is equally sympathetic to the pleasure and pains of all sentient beings. And, on another level, utilitarianism tends to evaluate highly actions motivated by sympathy and compassion, and to evaluate negatively actions motivated by malice and spite. Kantianism (or deontology, as it is often called) has a completely different structure and, consequently, a different attitude towards the emotions. It conceives of morality as the self-imposed laws of rational agents, and no emotion is thought to be involved in the generation of these laws. It is true that Kant himself does find a special role for the emotion—if that is the right word—of respect for rational agents and for the laws they impose on themselves. But Kant seems to regard respect as a sort of effect within us of our own inscrutable moral freedom, and not as the source of moral legislation. So one sort of emotion lies at the center of utilitarian thought, while deontology denies that any emotion can be thought of as the foundation of ethics. If we consider the evaluation given of particular actions, we find Kant's notorious claim that actions motivated by sympathy have no moral worth and that the only morally valuable motive is the sense of duty. The role of emotion in general, and of particular emotions, is different still in the virtue ethics tradition that traces back to Aristotle.

When we turn from academic ethics to the themes and ideas that run through our culture, we again encounter conflicting and contrasting trends. In politics we often hear calls for greater compassion and "tough love" for unfortunate members of our society. It was said that

Michael Dukakis was evaluated negatively by Americans when he responded too calmly in a debate in 1988 to a question about how he would react if his wife were murdered. Yet we sometimes are told that our foreign policy ought only to be guided by a cold calculation of national self-interest, and not by any compassionate excess incited by, say, pictures of Albanian refugees. There were commentators who said that Prime Minister Begin erred in agreeing to trade Arab prisoners for captured Israeli soldiers because of his sympathetic response to an interview with the captives' distraught relatives. Compassion, it was said, led him to betray a cardinal principle of Israeli politics: do not negotiate with terrorists.

In this essay I will address some of the issues that moral philosophers have raised about two particular emotions—compassion and sympathy. I do not think these two emotions are identical, as I plan to demonstrate. But they are similar, and I often will speak about one of them when I am really speaking about both. This is to avoid tiresome repetitions.

This essay will be divided into three parts. The first will say a little about emotions in general, and then some about what are called the 'moral emotions.' I then will try to characterize sympathy and compassion as distinctive moral emotions that embody certain beliefs and desires. There is little argumentation in the first part, and I am mainly concerned with giving a perspicuous description of these two emotions. But I think my account already makes clear why we think they are valuable emotions that we want to instill in our children, and in ourselves. In the second and third parts of this essay I will look at some of the philosophical arguments about sympathy that have been generated by Kant's approach to ethics. In both parts I am looking at sympathy and compassion and comparing them to the motive that Kant exclusively praised—the sense of duty. In part II, I will examine three arguments that Kant and his followers put forward to establish that sympathy is morally inferior to the sense of duty. In part III, I will examine an interesting argument put forward by some of Kant's opponents that tries to show that, on the contrary, sympathy is sometimes morally superior to the sense of duty as a motive. My verdict, which is tentative at certain points, is that neither side wins and that the two motives are both valuable, and neither is clearly more valuable in the

relevant comparison cases. A second point that I will emphasize from time to time is that sympathy and compassion have to be understood as emotions that have a certain important place in a person's character. However, they cannot be conceived of as the entirety of moral character, nor as the only morally important emotions.

As a final preliminary point, I will be largely looking at sympathy and the sense of duty as forms of motivation. By that I mean that I will look at them as psychological states that lead a person to act intentionally. Emotions have a passive aspect, which is captured in the older term for them, 'the passions.' This term emphasizes the respect in which we undergo—or are passive—in feeling an emotion. I do not deny that this is a feature of emotions. Some emotions, like grief, are only passive. But I will focus on the situations where compassion and sympathy lead a person to act, as they are known to do.

I

I begin with some remarks about the nature of emotion in general, and then turn to the so-called moral emotions.¹ Emotions constitute a diverse set of psychological states, and it is not easy to mark them off from the related phenomena of moods, instincts, attitudes, preferences, desires and dispositions. Common examples are fear, anger, pride, hatred, embarrassment, sadness, jealousy, pity, hope, and joy. Some philosophers would count amusement, friendship, love, and awe as emotions, but others would not. There is no generally accepted philosophical definition of emotion, but I think most philosophers would recognize the following significant aspects of them.

First of all there is usually a *belief* related to an emotion. (This bald statement needs certain qualifications that I will pass over.)² For example, fear usually involves the belief that one is in danger, or that someone whom one cares about is in danger. Sadness involves the belief that something bad has occurred. But, obviously, emotions involve more than beliefs, since it seems quite possible, for example, to believe that one is in danger without being fearful.

A second feature of emotions is typically a *desire* related in a certain intelligible way to the belief. To feel fear, for example, is not simply to believe one is in danger, but also to desire to avoid it. Many philosophers would say that even a set consisting of a belief and a

desire do not constitute an emotion, because these could be experienced, as it were, coldly and without emotion. Suppose that I walk across a road and see a truck in the distance heading toward me. I believe I am in danger and I desire to avoid it, but I may quite calmly and fearlessly walk to safety. Therefore, we might insist that emotions always involve certain *feelings and sensations* in addition to desires and beliefs. Some of these may be, as we say, bodily sensations, like the wrenching feeling in one's stomach that characterizes fear, but other sensations often are called psychic or mental, like the all-over ache of grief, or the lightness of spirit found in joy. Then, too, many emotions seem to involve pleasure and pain. So there seem to be at least three sorts of psychological states involved in emotions: beliefs, desires, and sensations, and often, as well, pleasure and pain. This is not to say that we typically experience these states separately, but they do seem to be distinguishable aspects of a unified state.³

Of course, when we think of emotions, we also think of what we call their external manifestations. By this we mean, first, the expression of the emotion in the person's body, especially her face, but also in her posture and movement. Second, emotions typically are *motives* that lead a person to act intentionally or, at least, incline her to act intentionally. ('Emotion' and 'motive' both derive from the Latin *movere*, to move.) Obviously, the connection between emotions and behavior can be understood as mediated by the desires that are part of them. But while emotions usually are expressed in a person's face and behavior, this connection is not invariable. It is possible to experience an emotion and not express it, or act on it, and it is possible to simulate the facial expression or actions associated with an emotion without experiencing it. Some emotions never incorporate desires nor serve as motives. Wordsworth spoke, in a memorable phrase, of "the impotence of grief," and this well captures the fact that grief necessarily involves no desire to do anything, since it is the pained realization that nothing *can* be done. The final feature of emotions I will mention is the physiological and neurological changes that often accompany them, like higher blood pressure or increased heart rate.

Moral emotions constitute a subset of emotions. Some examples of moral emotions are guilt, shame, gratitude, resentment, indignation, and sympathy.⁴ We might distinguish here between moral emotions in

a strict and a loose sense. Moral emotions in a strict sense incorporate a belief that explicitly uses a moral term. Guilt is a moral emotion in this sense, since guilt incorporates a belief that one has done something wrong, or is at least prepared to do wrong. Moral emotions in the loose sense use more general value terms, like ‘good’ and ‘bad’ or certain concepts closely related to moral concepts, like ‘benefit,’ ‘harm,’ and ‘well-being.’⁵ Shame, for example, might be thought to be a moral emotion in a loose sense, since one can be ashamed of a non-moral fault like poverty as well as a moral one like stealing. Thinking in this way, we would characterize sympathy and compassion as moral emotions in a loose sense, since they only involve the belief that someone is (undeservedly) suffering, perhaps along with the belief that this is a bad thing, or bad for her.⁶ Other than this one distinguishing characteristic, moral emotions are emotions in exactly the same way that fear and anger are. They incorporate characteristic desires, often involve distinctive sensations and experiences, may be pleasant or painful, and are associated with physiological changes, facial expressions, and types of intentional action. While there are moral philosophers who have criticized or condemned certain moral emotions like envy and even sympathy, perhaps only the Stoics ever condemned such emotions altogether. For all their other differences, the main schools of moral philosophy agree in holding that morally good people are disposed to experience some moral emotions in some circumstances.

Let’s turn now to compassion and sympathy. These seem to refer to related but distinct emotions. Pity, which might be thought to be a third emotion, seems simply to be an older term for compassion that is becoming less popular, perhaps because of its slightly condescending overtones. Sympathy and compassion involve a belief that another person is (undeservedly) suffering or badly off.⁷ Compassion seems the appropriate term if we believe that the suffering or misfortune is great; whereas, one can have sympathy for people who are merely in an embarrassing pickle. These emotions also involve a desire, which may be of varying strength, to relieve the suffering for the sake of the sufferer. This last clause—“for the sake of the sufferer”—is vital, because one might desire to relieve the suffering of someone only because one expects some return for oneself. The desire to help that is

involved in compassion embodies a concern for the other person as such, and is thought to be one of our best examples of *altruism*.⁸ Compassion and sympathy often motivate helping and relieving actions. And they seem to incorporate distinctive feelings of unease and even pain. We say that when one feels compassion for a person one ‘feels bad for her.’ If we tried to characterize the feelings involved in these emotions (what philosophers call their ‘phenomenology’) we would say that compassion and sympathy involve a kind of tension and constriction. The distinctive feelings in compassion and sympathy are largely ‘psychic,’ and we don’t think of these emotions as involving bodily feelings like the burning sensation in the pit of the stomach that characterizes intense fear. We assume that there are physiological aspects of sympathy and compassion, and we know that there are characteristic facial expressions for them, not to mention the crying they sometimes bring about.

Let’s consider now some of the salient moral aspects of sympathy and compassion. There are various ways that we can see that they occupy a distinct *part* of moral life, and are not the whole of it. They are not even the whole of altruism, as Lawrence Blum has noted. There are many situations in which we can act for the benefit of others that do not call even for sympathy. These are situations where the other persons are not badly off or suffering. So we might act for the benefit of someone who is already reasonably well off, or give a gift to someone who is not suffering. Compassion may be a more appropriate emotion for doctors than it is for teachers, at least ordinarily. Ordinarily respect, and desires to inform and deepen students’ understanding, would motivate teachers in their teaching. Compassion would be called for only under special circumstances—or in really hard subjects!

Also, sympathy and compassion seem to be peculiarly other-directed emotions. (This is conveyed by the prefixes ‘sym’ and ‘com,’ which indicate a relationship to another person.) We can easily conceive both of respect and self-respect, but we have no words ‘self-sympathy’ or ‘self-compassion.’ It is true that we speak of ‘self-pity,’ but I do not think it typically operates in a fashion analogous to the pity we have for others. We often speak of ‘wallowing’ in self-pity, and this seems to be essentially a passive posture of bewailing one’s

misfortunes. But compassion and sympathy involve a desire to help the object of it and are thus active, at least incipiently. It is an interesting question why we have no concept of self-sympathy. The fact that we don't highlights another respect in which these two moral emotions cannot be identified with all of morality, since they have no application to the self. Yet there are many moral considerations that concern the self, notably ideals. If I want to be, for example, a good citizen or teacher, my motivation is not going to be sympathy. Even if I wanted to be the most compassionate person I could be, I don't think my motivation for *that* would be compassion.

While I have said that sympathy and compassion are moral emotions only in a loose sense, it is clear that they are closely related to morality, that is, to the sympathetic person's moral outlook. One way that this is made manifest is with regard to issues of responsibility and desert. We clearly feel less sympathy for persons whose suffering is believed to be deserved, a point Aristotle noted in his discussion of tragedy. In fact, writers sometimes *define* compassion as directed only at suffering thought to be undeserved.⁹ This seems to be mistaken. I can well imagine someone who fully acknowledges that someone else's sufferings are deserved, but who nonetheless feels sympathy for her. Think, for example, of the spouse of someone in prison. But sympathy is not only lessened when the object of it is believed to have done something morally wrong. It also tends to diminish if the object of it is believed to be foolish or imprudent. Think of your reaction to people who buy houses on seismic fault lines or ride motorcycles without a helmet, and then suffer because of this.¹⁰ Many of the tangled issues about human responsibility reappear in our reactions to the sufferings of drug addicts, alcoholics, cigarette smokers, and other people whose wills do not strike all of us as entirely free. As a generalization, it certainly seems safe to say this: an observer's sympathy for another's self-inflicted sufferings declines as the observer believes that the other person's will was more fully free in making the fateful choices. In other words, the observer's sympathy is inversely related to the freedom of the person who harms herself.

There is another way that sympathy and compassion reflect moral convictions, even if they don't explicitly mention them. This point was originally made by Adam Smith in his work on the moral senti-

ments, and was recently elaborated on by Martha Nussbaum. One way to explain their point is to contrast sympathy with empathy. Empathy is thought of as a simple psychological mirroring of another's reaction: happiness in the observed person is duplicated—perhaps less intensely—in the observer; unhappiness likewise is duplicated. (Also, it is sometimes said that in empathy we imagine being the other person.) But sympathy does not differ from empathy only because sympathy is elicited by suffering or misfortune, whereas empathy can respond to another's happiness. A second difference is that sympathy is modulated by our moral convictions in ways that empathy as such is not.

We have just seen that we do not tend to feel sympathy for misfortunes that we believe are deserved. Smith and Nussbaum note that sympathy, furthermore, reflects the observer's moral outlook by incorporating her understanding of what constitutes misfortune in the first place. If a child cries hysterically over a broken toy, even the most sympathetic parent will not feel similarly upset. And if a dictator is angry and distraught because her lackeys do not grovel sufficiently before her, no one will feel sympathy. This shows that the sympathy felt by an observer reflects her own sense of what really goes into making up well-being and what really detracts from it. Empathy—conceived of as a simple mirroring in an observer of another person's feelings—is something quite different and much less discriminating. Indeed, once this distinction is made, it becomes unclear to what extent empathy really exists. It is also interesting to note that Smith's view has the consequence that even if a person is not suffering, an observer can feel sympathy for her. This can happen if the observer regards the other's condition as a *misfortune* that does not incorporate suffering. For example, one could feel sympathy for a loved one who has degenerated from Alzheimer's disease into a contented dementia. This shows that it is not quite accurate to say that the occasion for sympathy and compassion is suffering. It is more accurate to say that its occasion is misfortune, as reckoned by the observer.¹¹

Aristotle, writing about pity or compassion in his *Rhetoric*, said that this emotion is elicited when a person believes that someone else is suffering undeservedly from a cause that she believes could harm

her as well. It is something of a cliché to say that we feel sympathy for people whom we regard as similar to us. Martha Nussbaum, who follows Aristotle on this point, goes on to argue that the great obstacle to a morally adequate sense of sympathy is ignorance of the similar possibilities for loss that all human beings confront. She quotes these powerful words from Rousseau's *Emile*:

Why are kings without pity for their subjects? Because they count on never being human beings. Why are the rich so hard towards the poor? It is because they have no fear of being poor. Why does a noble have such contempt for a peasant? It is because he never will be a peasant....Do not, therefore, accustom your pupil to regard the sufferings of the unfortunate and the labors of the poor from the height of his glory; and do not hope to teach him to pity them if he considers them alien to him. Make him understand well that the fate of these unhappy people can be his.¹²

This well-meaning line of thought rests on a false assumption, namely, that we sympathize only with what we believe we may undergo. Clifford Orwin offers a nice counterexample to this claim. In Thucydides' account of the plague that fell on Athens in 431 BC, he observes that some people contracted the disease and then recovered. They realized that they were then immune to it. This did not cause them to lose compassion for those suffering from the plague. On the contrary, they felt it all the more, perhaps because their fear of it was greatly reduced.¹³ It is false to say that a man can feel no compassion for a woman in childbirth, or a quadriplegic for an injured sprinter. To this it might be replied that, in such cases, the observer still believes that he is able to suffer the same kind of pain or injury, even if not in the specific form being observed. The same problem reappears in a more general version. Why can't someone feel sympathy for a *kind* of loss he knows he cannot undergo? I suppose the problem is at its most extreme when we consider the situation of God, who is said to be compassionate but also perfect and, therefore, incapable of suffering harm or loss. The line of thought we are considering would find this state of affairs to be impossible. The truth of the matter seems to be this: we can feel compassion only for what we can *understand*. However, we can understand more than that which we have experi-

enced, and even more than we believe we are *capable* of experiencing. This is not to deny that people find it *easier* to understand what they have experienced, and that this presents real obstacles to the development of a wide-ranging sympathy.

This concludes my general discussion of sympathy and compassion. I have emphasized that they are distinctive moral emotions, and do not represent an all-sufficient set of moral motives. I think it is clear that I find it hard to deny that they are morally admirable and represent some of the emotional dispositions we rightly would hope to develop in ourselves and others. Many people would find it puzzling to discover that respected moral philosophers have criticized these emotions and the people who act on them. Yet, it is so. Aristotle, for one, does not criticize these emotions as much as neglect them. His *Nicomachean Ethics* is strikingly silent about compassion and sympathy, though he does discuss them in the *Rhetoric* and elsewhere.¹⁴ In the modern world, Nietzsche is perhaps the best-known critic of compassion. His indifference to human moral equality has certain similarities to Aristotle. It is more surprising to find a great defender of human moral equality, Kant, also critical of sympathy. I find this even more surprising, when recalling Kant's moving tribute to the profound influence that Rousseau, a great admirer of pity, had on him.¹⁵ And Kant has some impressive contemporary followers who are prepared to endorse his critical remarks about sympathy. In the second section of this essay, I want to discuss these interesting and important arguments. The issue in part II is whether compassion and sympathy are inferior as motivation to the sense of duty.

II

In Kant's great work *The Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* there is a well-known discussion of sympathy and sympathetic people. His point is to show that the motive of sympathy has no special moral value or worth, and that it is deficient when compared to what he calls the motive of duty. The 'sense of duty' (or 'motive of duty') may sound like a somewhat old-fashioned idea that was exemplified only by British military officers. But this would be a misunderstanding. What Kant is referring to by the sense of duty is motivation by the conviction that an action is morally right, or morally required. (He

also seems to be thinking that the agent will understand *why* the action is right.)¹⁶ This, I am confident, is something with which we are all familiar. Kant claimed that being moved by sympathy is morally inferior to being moved by the conviction that one's action is right. Here are his words (in English):

To help others where one can is a duty, and besides this there are many spirits of so sympathetic a temper that, without any further motive of vanity or self-interest, they find an inner pleasure in spreading happiness around them and can take delight in the contentment of others as their own work. Yet I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however right and amiable it may be, has still no genuinely moral worth. It stands on the same footing as other inclinations—for example, the inclination for honor, which if fortunate enough to hit on something beneficial and right and consequently honorable, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem; for its maxim lacks moral content, namely the performance of actions not from inclination, but *from duty*. Suppose then that the mind of this friend of man were overclouded by sorrows of his own which extinguished all sympathy with the fate of others, but that he still had power to help those in distress, though no longer stirred by the need of others because sufficiently occupied with his own; and suppose that, when no longer moved by any inclination, he tears himself out of this deadly insensibility and does the action without any inclination out of duty alone; then for the first time his action has its genuine moral worth. Still further: if nature had implanted little sympathy in this or that man's heart; if (being in other respects an honest fellow) he were cold in temperament and indifferent to the sufferings of others—perhaps because, being endowed with the special gift of patience and robust endurance in his own sufferings, he assumed the like in others or even demanded it; if such a man (who would in truth not be the worst product of nature) were not exactly fashioned by her to be a philanthropist, would he not still find in himself a source from which he might draw a worth far higher than any that a good-natured temperament can have? Assuredly he would. It is precisely in this that the worth of character begins to show—a moral worth

and beyond all comparison the highest—namely, that he does good, not from inclination but from duty.¹⁷

Kant is taking it as given that we have duties or obligations to help other people. We can assume the situations giving rise to these duties largely occur when another person is suffering. He notes that some people are inclined to help in such cases, and do not find doing so burdensome. But some people are temperamentally not so inclined, and others may lose the inclination when, as he shrewdly notes, they become preoccupied with their own problems. But both kinds of people can still help. How? His picture is that they can realize that they are obligated to do so and act, as he says, merely from the understanding that they are obligated to do so. What point exactly is Kant making here about the sense of duty as a kind of motivation that contrasts with the emotion of sympathy? I think that the most plausible interpretation of the passage is as follows. Sympathy involves a desire to help another person that constitutes part of our natural psychology, a psychology we share, presumably, with certain animals. The sense of duty is not a *desire* at all, and our being moved by it represents motivation by reason alone. And to be moved by reason alone is to be moved by something incomparably higher than any desire we share with other parts of nature. I take it that there is a further point being alluded to here. If our ability to perform our duties had to rely only on natural desires, like those involved in sympathy, then we would be at a loss in those cases where it didn't exist. But in situations where sympathy is temporarily or even permanently dead, we have within ourselves another source of motivation, a source that is always available; namely, our reason. Reason commands us to help those in need, and reason alone can bring us to do so. It is important to emphasize Kant's belief that we have duties to help others, and his position does not rest on any denial that other people as such have moral claims on us. The issue concerns our *motivation* for helping others when that is morally required.

This famous passage has generated debate from Kant's own day down to our own. It is by no means clear that it represents his complete or final word on emotions like sympathy. In a later, and less-read work, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, for example, he writes as follows:

...While it is not in itself a duty to share the sufferings (as well the joys) of others, it is a duty to sym-

pathize actively in their fate; and to this end it is therefore an indirect duty to cultivate the compassionate natural...feelings in us, and to make use of them as so many means to sympathy based on moral principles and the feeling appropriate to them. It is therefore a duty not to avoid the places where the poor who lack the most basic necessities are to be found but rather to seek them out, and not to shun sick-rooms or debtors' prisons and so forth in order to avoid sharing painful feelings one may not be able to resist. For this is still one of the impulses that nature has implanted in us to do what the representation of duty alone would not accomplish.¹⁸

There are philosophers writing today who still find the contrast drawn in *The Groundwork* between sympathy and the sense of duty to be important and convincing. Perhaps the best known contemporary Kantians who have written on the sense of duty as a kind of moral motivation are Christine Korsgaard, Barbara Herman, and Marcia Baron.¹⁹ They do not all agree on what Kant is insisting on, or which of his points have validity. They do agree that something important was said by him that should serve to limit, if not extinguish, our admiration for sympathy and compassion as forms of motivation.

I will mention two more points about sympathy and compassion that these writers claim to draw out of Kant's thought. First, there is simply the fact that sympathy operating on its own can lead a person to act wrongly. Sympathy that a juror has for a plaintiff in a civil case, for example, might lead him to vote for a decision in the plaintiff's favor, in spite of good evidence pointing the other way. Or recall the accusation against Prime Minister Begin: that compassion for hostages led him to strike a wrongful deal with terrorists. This point about compassionate wrongdoing is not directly made in the long passage I quoted, since there Kant's supposition was that the actions in question were obligatory, not wrong. And he was suggesting that the *absence* of sympathy might leave a person with no motivation to do what she is required to do. Many Kantians note that Kant is not only concerned to argue that reason can direct us to do what is obligatory. They say he is also arguing that reason can test to see whether our desires or inclinations are leading us to do wrong. Reason, in Kant's picture of human psychology, stands as a sort of judge over our desires, and places limits on the ones on which we are morally per-

mitted to act. So the sense of duty as a motive has two roles to play in our moral life. It can direct us to do what is morally required. But reason also can operate as a limit or boundary that prevents any desire we have from leading us to do wrong. In Herman's useful terminology, the sense of duty operates both as a 'primary motive' that leads us to do what is right, and as a 'limiting motive' that prevents us from doing what is wrong.²⁰ Herman thinks Kantians can only admire actions where the sense of duty is the primary motive, leading us to act. She thinks that sympathy as such operates with nothing that limits it to permissible actions, so that it never has moral worth as a motive. The only actions that have moral worth or value are those that are obligatory, and the only motive for doing them that is worthy is the rational interest—we can't say 'desire,' of course—in doing them *because* they are obligatory.

Herman also has suggested another reason for downplaying the moral value of sympathy and actions motivated by it. She elicits a fascinating argument from the quotation in *The Groundwork*, where Kant says that the impulse for honor may, "if fortunate," hit upon a right action. Here is her argument. Suppose that sympathy moves a person to help another, which is morally required of her. Still, says Herman, she didn't act that way because it was required: she was moved merely to relieve suffering. So how can anyone suppose that performing the action is morally valuable, since the fact that it was right (or required) had nothing to do with her reason for choosing it? Its being right is a fortunate accident that has no value.²¹ Clearly, this second point is connected to the first. If a form of motivation is not attentive to rightness, then it may accidentally lead someone to do what is right. But it may also lead her to do what is wrong. Herman thus writes:

The man of sympathetic temper, while concerned with others, is indifferent to morality. In Kant's language, the maxim of his action—the subjective principle on which the agent acts—has no moral content. If we suppose that the only motive the agent has is the desire to help others, then we are imagining someone who would not be deterred by the fact that his action is morally wrong. And, correspondingly, the moral rightness of an action is no part of what brings him to act....[W]hile sympathy can give an interest in an

action that is (as it happens) right, it cannot give an interest in its being right.²²

Let's take stock of these three Kantian arguments. They all involve a contrast between emotions like sympathy and the sense of duty. They, therefore, bear witness to some of the deepest themes in Kant's moral philosophy: that morality constitutes the self-imposed laws of reason; that duty or obligation is the central concept of morality; that practical reason is something distinct from, and superior to, our natural desires; and that our experience of morality gives us a sense of our being creatures who are not simply sophisticated animals subject to the laws of nature. They also might be said to embody the following thought: that whatever emotions like sympathy can do morally, the sense of duty—which, for Kant, is literally 'reason in action'—can do better and more reliably. They, therefore, seem to make a bold claim. While those who praise sympathy and compassion rarely contend that they constitute all-sufficient forms of motivation, suitable for all moral occasions, as it were, Kantians seem to be claiming that the sense of duty is all-sufficient. I find these arguments fascinating and challenging, precisely because they put in question the strong intuitive belief many of us have that compassion and sympathy *are* morally admirable emotions and motives. I want to respond briefly to each of the three arguments, without doing any of them full justice.

First, there is Kant's point that sympathy or compassion may not be present when help is known to be needed. Of course, this is true. There really is the phenomenon that is sometimes called 'compassion fatigue,' and it is worrisome. There can be other causes of a lack of sympathy for people whom one is obligated to help. We saw that irresponsibility that harms the person who is irresponsible tends to extinguish our sympathy for her. Yet it may be the case that someone else is obligated to assist her nonetheless. Park rangers may have no sympathy for foolish visitors who leave the trails without a map. Another factor to be mentioned is that personal dislike or rivalry can diminish sympathy. Often, sheer physical unattractiveness can deaden sympathy: hence the need charities have for what are called 'poster children.' But we can ask whether it is correct to suppose that the sense of duty, in contrast to sympathy, is a motive that is always "available"—as Lawrence Blum put it—when an agent believes that she has

a moral obligation.²³ The long passage I quoted from Kant does seem to suggest that he thought that the sense of duty is always available. I would contend that there is other evidence—that I won't mention here—that suggests that Kant did not believe that it is always available. Considered as a thesis in its own right, it is doubtful that we always *can* act from the sense of duty when we believe we have some moral obligation. I cannot do justice to this important question now. It is connected with deep questions about moral requirements and the famous philosophical slogan, attributed to Kant himself: “‘ought’ implies ‘can’.”²⁴ The only other point I will make now is that, even if it is correct to say that sympathy is not always present when help is morally required and that the sense of duty is always present, it doesn't follow that only the latter has value and should be cultivated. Sympathy may be valuable when it is present in the face of undeserved misfortune, even if it isn't always present in such a situation.

Second, there is the criticism that sympathy can lead a person to act wrongly. Again, this is obviously true. The quickest response would simply point out that the sense of duty also can lead to wrongdoing. We needn't catalogue the numerous atrocities down through the centuries that were perpetrated by people who believed they were doing the right thing. Another point would be to note again that sympathy is not a purely amoral mirroring of another's suffering, along with a desire to relieve it. Sympathy is modulated by our notions of desert, responsibility, and wrongdoing. It would be unusual—although not impossible—for an observer to feel sympathy for someone in a case where the observer was convinced that relieving the other's suffering would be morally wrong. Lastly, it should be pointed out that Kantians are attacking a straw man when they suggest that sympathy is defective because by itself it places no moral limits on where it will lead a person. This is to suggest that philosophers who value sympathy *only* value sympathy as a moral motive, which is a distortion. I have been trying to show that sympathy and compassion are parts of a properly developed moral personality, but I have not said that they are the whole of it. So it is misleading to compare sympathy and the sense of duty as if each were being proposed as the complete basis of a properly-developed character. Kantians are correct to insist on the need to limit our compassion by our understanding of what is moral-

ly permissible. They are mistaken if they think this shows that acting from compassion has no value.

Finally, there is Herman's contention that sympathetic characters have no concern for morality as such, and their actions, if right, are only right accidentally. Here is my answer. The sort of action that compassion ordinarily moves us to perform is, as we say, helping. If someone were helping from the sense of duty, she would be thinking of her duty as logically resting on the fact that helping is morally required in the circumstances. The rightness of her action is *due to* the fact that it helps someone in need. Therefore, it is unconvincing to hear the action of the compassionate person described as "accidentally right." The compassionate person is focussing on the very same natural characteristics that the dutiful person is, but she is presumably not thinking of them as morally required. Compare these two examples. I decide, after consulting a horoscope, to give \$100 to the fourth person who walks into the room, and it turns out that this person needs the money to pay for some medical care. Here it would seem proper to say that my action is accidentally right. But now consider a case where I understand that a person has those medical needs (and can't pay herself, etc.) and compassion moves me to help her. It is odd to say that my action here is accidentally right. Now, an action from compassion could be accidentally right in some cases. If a juror decided to vote for whichever side in a law case she felt the most compassion for, then it might be that her vote was accidentally right. The compassion here is not focussing on the morally relevant factors. But if someone helps another person who is suffering, where it is precisely the suffering that makes her helping morally right, then I cannot see that her action is accidentally right.

III

Where do these arguments and replies leave us? Kantians argue that action from sympathy is morally inferior to action from the sense of duty. I have contended that these arguments are unsuccessful. When sympathy leads to the relieving of undeserved suffering it is not necessarily worse as a motive than the sense of duty. But could the opposite case be made? That is, could it be argued that action motivated by sympathy is at least sometimes morally *superior* to action

from the sense of duty? This has, in fact, been argued. In this third section I want to consider the opposing case made by the critics of Kant who turn the tables on him and make this claim. I confess to you at the outset that I am somewhat uncertain about what to say on the issues I will now present.

Sympathy and compassion, on the one hand, and the sense of duty, on the other, are motives that can lead a person to help another person for the other's sake. Some philosophers who have defended these emotions against the Kantian criticisms have, in effect, asked whether the dutiful agent can provide *all* of the help that the sympathetic person can. I believe Henry Sidgwick, now often regarded as the greatest of the 19th-century utilitarians, first made a point something like this. Sidgwick wrote, "benefits which spring from affection and are lovingly bestowed are more acceptable to the recipients than those conferred without affection, in the taste of which there is admittedly something harsh and dry."²⁵ Bernard Williams put the same, or a similar, point in a characteristically pungent way, in his seminal essay, "Morality and the Emotions." Williams asked, "is it certain that one who receives good treatment from another more appreciates it, thinks the better of the giver, if he knows it to be the result of the application of principle, rather than the product of an emotional response? He may have needed, not the benefits of universal law, but some human gesture."²⁶ And it has been elaborated on and emphasized by Lawrence Blum and Michael Stocker, the two most forceful defenders of the role of sympathy and compassion in contemporary moral philosophy.²⁷ Stocker is well-known for his example of a person who learns, to her disappointment, that someone whom she *thought* was a friend has visited her in the hospital only because it was her *duty* to do so.²⁸ These philosophers are denying Kant's implicit point that all the help the emotions provide can be provided as well or better by the sense of duty. Isn't it possible, they ask, that someone might want or need *sympathy* or *compassion*? If so, it just wouldn't be true that the sense of duty would do as well or better as the motivation for helping.

It is curious that Kant himself may have granted this point. In a later chapter of *The Groundwork*, Kant presents his famous illustrations of the operation of the supreme principle of morality, the Categorical Imperative. He is trying to show that it is a duty to help

others in need, and he asks us to consider an agent who has the maxim, or principle, never to help others, but to “let everyone be as happy as Heaven wills or as he can make himself.” Kant claims that such a principle could not be willed as a law of nature that is followed by all rational creatures. This shows, according to his moral theory, that it would be morally wrong to act on the maxim. *Why* would it not be possible to will that such a maxim of unhelpfulness become a law of nature? Kant answers:

...A will which decided in this way would be in conflict with itself, since many a situation might arise in which *the man needed love and sympathy from others*, and in which, by such a law of nature sprung from his own will, he would rob himself of all hope of the help he wants for himself.²⁹

If we take seriously the use in this translation of the word “sympathy” in both this passage and the one given before, we encounter a paradox in Kant’s view. Acting from sympathy, even when the action is morally required, has no moral worth, the first passage claimed. Yet the present passage says that what the person will need and want is sympathy or love. It does not say that what he will need and want is something done from the sense of duty. The paradox, then, is that Kant says we may want something that is, according to his own philosophy, of no moral worth!³⁰

In considering this argument I think a number of points must be kept in mind. First, it is important to be careful about the nature of the comparison that is being presented to us. Stocker and Sidgwick obviously are thinking of friendship and affection, and the last passage from Kant speaks of “love and sympathy.” I think we can take it for granted that we naturally would prefer to be helped by agents acting out of friendship, love, and affection, as compared to agents motivated only by the sense of duty. And it is very clear that, if we keep the same agent in mind, this preference grows stronger. I would much prefer that a given friend of mine help me from friendship rather than from the sense of duty.

But all of this is beside the point, since the comparison was to be between the sense of duty and sympathy or compassion. We can have compassion for a person who is not a friend or even someone we know. And we can have sympathy for someone we do not like or have

affection for. So, to make a fair comparison between the two forms of motivation, we have to strip away other features of the agent like affection for the recipient. We can then imagine that one recipient interacts with a given agent at two different times, and reckons that the agent is motivated by compassion on one occasion and the sense of duty on the other. Or we can imagine that one recipient interacts on one occasion with two agents, otherwise comparable, where she infers that one of them is motivated by compassion and the other is motivated by the sense of duty. It might be asked why we have to suppose that the recipient *recognizes* the difference in motivation. But the argument we are considering compares how welcome to the recipient the two types of motivation are, so this supposition seems necessary to test the claim that compassion is more welcome.

Furthermore, in comparing the two motives, we need to keep constant whatever else is being provided to the recipient. It seems likely that average recipients of help would prefer receiving a new home from compassion to receiving a glass of water from the sense of duty. And, finally, we need to keep constant the agent's understanding of the recipient's condition. Lawrence Blum claims that sympathy as a character trait can make a person more acutely aware of the needs that others have for help. He gives the example of such a person riding on a subway, and says that she will be more likely than a non-sympathetic person to notice that someone is tired and needs a seat. Therefore, she will be more likely to give up her seat than others will. Blum writes, in opposition to Kant, "the indifferent man of duty is much less likely than the man of sympathy to apprehend the other person as in distress in the first place."³¹ Whatever we want to say about the truth of this claim, it seems to me that it muddies the waters to make it an issue in the comparison we are trying to make. Unless Blum wishes to make the strong claim that you can *only* know of another's needs by means of sympathy, we have to suppose in a given case, that this knowledge can be possessed by both sorts of agent (or the same agent when moved by the different motives). Otherwise, you would be pondering the following question: would you prefer to be helped by a compassionate person who understands your needs, or would you prefer to be *looked at* by a dutiful person, who doesn't understand them? Take your time before you answer!

So, let's consider this scenario. You are walking by yourself in a strange city when you suddenly become violently ill. You pass out on the sidewalk. When you come to, there are two people looking after you. They provide thoughtful care to you in about equal measure. It becomes clear to you that one of the two is being moved by compassion, while the other is moved by the sense of duty. Would you feel more grateful, more fully assisted and cared for, by one rather than the other? If I try to fully imagine such a test case for myself, I must report that I find no difference in how I imagine feeling about the two people and their actions.

Some of you might respond that I am missing the profound point that Williams is making when he speaks of needing a "human gesture." My example supposed that the needs in question were, as we say, physical. The picture we form is that we need, say, a drink of water or support for our head. And our reaction is that they would be just as welcome if provided by compassion as they would if provided by the sense of duty. But, Williams is asking, what if the very thing you need is *a compassionate gesture*? Here I think of an episode that has been called "baseball's finest moment." (It does not involve Mark McGwire.) It occurred when Jackie Robinson was playing his first year in the major leagues. Game after game, he was subjected to the jeers and cursing of racist fans, and often was the target of thrown bottles and rotten fruit. Here is the passage from Robinson's autobiography in which he recounts something that his Brooklyn teammate, Pee Wee Reese, did.

In Boston during a period when the heckling pressure seemed unbearable, some of the Boston players began to heckle Reese. They were riding him about being a Southerner and playing ball with a black man. Pee Wee didn't answer them. Without a glance in their direction, he left his position and walked over to me. He put his hand on my shoulder and began talking to me. His words weren't important. I don't even remember what he said. It was the gesture of comradeship and support that counted. As he stood talking with me with a friendly arm around my shoulder, he was saying loud and clear, "Yell. Heckle. Do anything you want. We came here to play baseball."³²

It was a simple, but also a morally grand, gesture. It was what I think Williams had in mind by his phrase "a human gesture." We can well

imagine that it was precisely what Robinson needed. (Obviously, the gesture also was directed at the Boston players. We might even say that it was what *they* needed, too! But let's set this aspect of Reese's action aside, and focus on its meaning to Robinson. Also, Reese's gesture bespoke a friendliness that we saw is not at issue. But the example is—if you'll pardon the expression—in the ballpark.) The critical question, then, is this: could Robinson's needs have been met just as well by an action motivated by the sense of duty?

I think we are inclined to answer, "No, Robinson's needs would not have been met as well if Reese had been moved by the sense of duty." But this answer calls for critical examination. After all, it is not as though someone motivated by a sense of duty can't put his arm around another person. So perhaps our thought is that, if this gesture had been performed from the sense of duty—from the sense that it was the morally right thing to do—it would not have been as *natural* as it would have been had Reese acted from a feeling like sympathy. And perhaps we are thinking that, since the sense of duty is a non-emotional form of motivation—Kant thinks of it as motivation by reason itself—it is, therefore, as we say, cold. Then we may conclude that the gesture made by the dutiful agent will be awkward and stiff, and, thus, less comforting to the recipient. Or we may be thinking that acting from duty involves a more reflective and self-conscious attitude than acting from sympathy does, and that this will mean that dutiful actions are more reserved and less comforting.³³ I do not find these lines of thought to be fully convincing. For one thing, I am not sure why we are allowed to assume that people who act from an emotion do so, as we say, 'naturally.' Compassion in one person might be expressed very awkwardly, whereas another person might be quite at ease and reassuring when she does what she believes is right and helps someone. And the reflectiveness of the dutiful person could result in a kind of self-confidence that was lacking in someone acting in a more spontaneous fashion.

I would like to conclude by returning us to the beginning of this essay. My remarks just above were directed toward what we might call the style involved in the two sorts of motivation. I was considering the suggestion that people who act from an emotion like sympathy act less awkwardly than people moved by a sense of duty. We

might think about the issue in a different way. Reese's action, we could say, was an *expressive* action, and his help to Robinson consisted largely in his expressing his feeling to him. We know that Robinson was grateful for this expressive gesture.³⁴ But we can ask: *what* would Reese have been expressing had he been acting from sympathy that he would not have been expressing had he acted from the sense of duty? This brings us back to the nature of sympathy as a moral motive, and how it differs from a similar action motivated by the sense of duty. The *beliefs* involved in the two cases would be similar, although not identical. The sympathetic agent and the dutiful agent could both believe that Robinson was unfairly being shown contempt, and they both would be motivated to relieve his suffering for its own sake. The dutiful agent would regard the relieving action as morally required, but the sympathetic person would not. It seems that the other differences would revolve around the features of emotions in general: the sympathetic person would be feeling certain distinctive sensations, presumably largely of a psychic or mental sort, and perhaps a certain amount of pain or uneasiness. There might be certain characteristic involuntary facial expressions manifested by the sympathetic person. (There are also the physiological aspects of emotion like increased heart rate, but it is hard to see how these play any role in the question now before us.) Of course, a conscientious person might feel uneasy, too, and have the very same facial expression as the sympathetic person, but the point is that she might not. Insofar, then, as the two sorts of agent are *experiencing* somewhat different things, they would, if sincere, be *expressing* different things in their gestures. We might say that the 'content' or 'message' of their gestures would, or at least *could*, be slightly different. Often these subtle differences would not be noticed by the recipient, but sometimes they would. We then need to ask: would one content or message be more valuable to the recipient?³⁵

I think we are strongly inclined to say that the sympathetic gesture is more valuable. We seem to suppose that the feeling component of sympathy as such is of value to us, and establishes a more human bond between the giver and the receiver. Our idiomatic way to speak of the relevant aspect of sympathy is to say that the sympathetic person 'feels bad' about the other's misfortune, and the dutiful person

does not, or may not. Our thinking seems to be that the feelings in an emotion like sympathy are evidence of a deeper concern for the other person, of a more complete identification with her misfortune. But I wonder whether this belief is something more than a rough psychological generalization that we would adhere to in face of competing evidence. To test this thought let's imagine a case that recalls Kant. Jones knows that Smith is lately rather preoccupied with certain family problems and is, at least temporarily, somewhat depressed and 'emotionally numb.' A situation arises like that in Robinson's autobiography, and Jones is being subject to some contemptuous abuse in the office. Like Reese, Smith believes the hecklers are acting wrongly, and, in the presence of some of them, Smith puts his arm on Jones' shoulder. Jones and Smith are not close friends. However, Jones knows Smith well enough to know that he is *not* feeling compassion as he acts, but is deeply committed to standing by Jones. Since Jones has special knowledge about Smith in particular, and has no doubts about Smith's understanding of his undeserved suffering, and commitment to doing something about it, would he be any *more* pleased with Smith's gesture if it were motivated in a more familiar way by compassion and its attendant feelings?³⁶ I wonder. If my suspicion is correct, then the psychic feelings that partly characterize compassion are a common and usually-reliable *indication* of an understanding of and commitment to the other's welfare. But they are not regarded as otherwise of special value to the recipient of compassion. If I were sure you understood my misfortune and wanted to help relieve me, I don't think I would be more grateful to you if I believed you also 'felt bad' about my situation.

Therefore, we can agree with Williams that "human gestures" are a vital aspect of our moral relations. But it is not clear that what such gestures are welcomed for providing is their communication of an agent's psychic feelings as such. Reese provided Robinson with something of value when he put his arm on Robinson's shoulder. But he could have provided this good had he been acting from the sense of duty. This suggests that the sense of duty is not inferior to emotions like sympathy, even in cases where expressive gestures are the very thing that an agent gives to someone in need. As I said before, I am not certain I'm right about this. But if I am, I can conclude this essay

with the pleasantly symmetrical assertion that compassion and sympathy are no *worse* than the sense of duty as a form of motivation, but no *better*, either.³⁷

Endnotes

- 1 The best general accounts of emotion by philosophers are those of Ronald De Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987); William Lyons, *Emotion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Robert Gordon, *The Structure of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); O. H. Green, *The Emotions: a philosophical theory* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992). Also see the stimulating and idiosyncratic Robert Solomon, *The Passions* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976). *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amelie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) is a broad collection of essays, mainly by philosophers.
- 2 In the philosophy of art this contention has been questioned. It has been noted that we may, for example, fear that a character in a fictional work is about to fall off a cliff, and yet we don't believe that she is going to do this, because we don't believe that she exists! On the issues in art, see the essays in Pt. I of *Emotion and the Arts*, ed. Mette Hjort and Sue Laver (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). For other qualifications concerning non-fictional contexts see Patricia Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons: An Inquiry into Emotional Justification* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 17-20; Robert Roberts, "What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," *The Philosophical Review* 97 (1988), 183-209, at 195-201; and Michael Stocker, "Emotional Thoughts," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1987), 59-69. These writers hold that a belief is not required for emotions like fear, and that a mere thought can suffice. On the other hand, some writers hold that even a thought is unnecessary for emotions like fear, since animals and infants who have no thoughts at all can still feel it. See John Deigh, "Cognitivism in the Theory of Emotions," *Ethics* 104 (1994), 824-54, at 839-42; Jenefer Robinson, "Startle," *The Journal of Philosophy* 92 (1995), 53-74.
- 3 Roberts, 184; 208-9.
- 4 On the moral emotions in general, see Lawrence Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); Justin Oakley, *Morality and the Emotions* (London: Routledge, 1992); Gabriel Taylor, *Pride, Shame and Guilt: Emotions of Self-assessment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Michael Stocker with Elizabeth Hegeman, *Valuing Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Greenspan, *op. cit.*, and *Practical Guilt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), Part II. There is a large literature on guilt and shame and their supposed differences.
- 5 If Lyons' theory is right, all emotions are moral emotions in this loose sense. See also the interesting article by Bennett Helm, "The Significance of Emotions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 31 (1994), 319-31.
- 6 The significance of the parenthetical qualification about undeserved suffering will be discussed below.
- 7 Throughout I am indebted to Blum, "Compassion," in Rorty, ed., *op. cit.*, 507-18. Martha Nussbaum, "Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 13 (1996), 27-58, is helpful. See also Clifford Orwin, "Compassion," *The American Scholar* (1980), 309-33.

- 8 Stephen Darwall, "Empathy, Sympathy, Care," *Philosophical Studies* 89 (1998), 261-82, at 263, 276-77.
- 9 E.g., Nussbaum.
- 10 Leon Kass vigorously emphasized this in a paper for the Maguire Center.
- 11 Yet, interestingly, we do not feel compassion for those who have already undergone the misfortune of death, at least if we regard their existence as terminated.
- 12 Nussbaum, *op. cit.*, 34, quoting *Emile*, trans. Bloom, 224.
- 13 Orwin, *op. cit.*, 322. The reference is to Thucydides II 51.
- 14 This is an ironic fact when we consider the work of Martha Nussbaum. She places compassion squarely in the center of her ethics and is a deep admirer of Aristotle. Yet Aristotle's explicitly ethical works pay almost no attention to this emotion, and one has to turn to his works on drama and rhetoric to find the topic treated at all.
- 15 Kant wrote: "By inclination I am an inquirer. I feel a consuming thirst for knowledge, the unrest which goes with desire to progress in it, and satisfaction in every advance in it. There was a time when I believed this constituted the honor of humanity, and I despised the people, who know nothing. Rousseau corrected me in this. This blinding prejudice disappeared and I learned to honor man. I would find myself more useless than the common laborer if I did not believe that this attitude of mine [as an inquirer] can give worth to all others in establishing the rights of mankind." Kant's *Reflexionen* (Fragments), quoted in Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 165 n 4.
- 16 On this point see Christine Korsgaard, "From Duty and for the Sake of the Noble: Kant and Aristotle on Morally Good Action," in *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty*, ed. Stephen Engstrom and Jennifer Whiting (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 203-36, at 209-10.
- 17 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 66. Emphasis in text. I have modified the translation at one point to take account of a criticism of Paton by Marcia Baron. She objects to his rendering of *aus Pflicht* as "for the sake of duty." Baron prefers "from duty" or "out of duty." See Marcia Baron, *Kantian Ethics almost without Apology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 13.
- 18 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. M.J. Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 250-1. An overview of Kant's views on the moral emotions is given in Nancy Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chap. 4.
- 19 Christine Korsgaard, "Kant's Analysis of Obligation; The argument of Groundwork I," in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 43-76, esp. 55-61; "From Duty...," *op. cit.*; *The Sources of Normativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 242-51; Barbara Herman, "On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty," in

- The Practice of Moral Judgment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1-22; “Integrity and Impartiality,” *Ibid.*, 23-44; Marcia Baron, *op. cit.*, esp. chap. 4.
- 20 Herman, “On the Value,” *op. cit.*, 14-15.
- 21 We might say that Herman is utilizing for her purposes the point I made above when I called sympathy a moral emotion in only a loose sense.
- 22 Herman “On the Value,” *op. cit.*, 5.
- 23 Blum, *Friendship*, *op. cit.*, 30f.
- 24 I discuss these issues in “Kant, Non-accidentalness and the Availability of Moral Worth.”
- 25 Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, seventh ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 223.
- 26 Bernard Williams, “Morality and the Emotions,” in *Problems of the Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 227.
- 27 For Blum, see *Friendship*, *op. cit.*, 142f.
- 28 Michael Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976), 462. See also his “Friendship and Duty: Some Difficult Relations,” in *Identity, Character, and Morality*, ed. Owen Flanagan and Amelie Rorty (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 219-34.
- 29 *Groundwork*, tr. Paton, *op. cit.*, 90-1, emphasis added.
- 30 Herman, too, in a response to Williams, more or less explicitly concedes that it may be reasonable to want to be helped by someone moved by an emotion, rather than the sense of duty. “Integrity,” *op. cit.*, 29-37.
- 31 Blum, *Friendship*, *op. cit.*, 136, slightly modified. See all of 129-37 for the entire argument.
- 32 Jackie Robinson, as told to Alfred Duckett, *I Never Had It Made* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1972), 77. The characterization of this as “baseball’s finest moment” comes from Roger Kahn, as quoted by Bob Herbert in *The Raleigh News and Observer*, March 17, 1997, A9.
- 33 Korsgaard is happy to affirm that the sense of duty is a more reflective motive than sympathy. See “From Duty...,” *op. cit.*, 209-10. Cp. “Kant’s Analysis...,” *op. cit.*, 60. See also W. D. Ross for this idea. *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 154-63, at 162.
- 34 Notice that such gestures are not always possible—e.g., when the agent has no way of communicating with the object of her concern. Some objects of concern in our presence, such as children and animals, may not be able to understand them. It also may be true that, in some cases where it would be possible to make such a gesture, and it would be understood, it would nonetheless be inappropriate to make it. One case is where it would exacerbate the misfortune of the other person. For example, a teacher might not want to express sympathy for a nervous piano student at a recital who was unable to recall his piece.
- 35 I take the question that Michael Stocker credits to Richard Moran to be pressing the same issue that I am presenting here. *Valuing Emotions*, *op. cit.*, 54, n 41.
- 36 In Martha Nussbaum’s view, Smith’s action can still be said to have its source in compassion, since she regards the psychic feelings at issue here as inessen-

tial. Or at least she says this with regard to bodily feelings which, of course, are a different matter. "Compassion," *op. cit.*, 38.

37 I am indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Cary Maguire for their generosity in funding the public scholars program. I want to thank Bill May for selecting me as a Maguire Public Scholar, and Dick Mason and Donna Yarri for their helpfulness and consideration in the preparation of the lecture. Alastair Norcross kindly agreed to introduce me at the lecture, and offered, as always, some acute comments. A number of people at the lecture made helpful comments, but I would especially like to thank Martha Satz for her thoughtful remarks.

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