

## IS EMPATHY ALL WE NEED?

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Michael Slote's *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* (ECE), Routledge, 2007, and *Moral Sentimentalism* (MS), Oxford University Press, 2010, present two stages in a very ambitious plan, to give an account of both normative morality and metaethics in the same sentimentalist terms, in particular in terms of empathy. ECE is concerned more with normative ethics, and the metaethical views it expresses are tentative. But, of MS, which in its normative ethics repeats much from ECE, Slote writes, "This book attempts to deal with metaethical and normative issues in the same sentimentalist terms, and I believe offers a more thoroughgoing, a more systematic defense of moral sentimentalism than anything that has appeared since Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*." (MS: i) Proud words. Hume's own attempt to do better, his *Enquiry into the Principles of Morals*, is largely ignored, since sympathy in the sense of empathy plays a lesser role there than in the earlier work, and the main sentiment playing a part in its metaethics is not sympathy, but the broader-ranging "sentiment of humanity". Slote tries to convince the reader that our fundamental moral capacity is empathy, and that degree of wrongness of action is determined in part (ECE) or altogether (MS) by degree of lack of empathy or normal sharing of others' feelings, a lack that produces a "chill" when we attempt to empathize with those who show it in their actions. "Distinctions of empathy broadly mark or correspond to plausible moral distinctions, and....empathy is crucial to moral motivation." (ECE: 125) In MS the claim is not just that plausible moral distinctions correspond with degree of empathy, but that the meaning of "right" and "wrong" can be given in terms of higher-level empathy (MS: 68). Empathy felt by agents is taken to motivate action to help others, and knowing what is the right thing to do is knowing what the person with proper empathy, that is empathy we can empathize with, would do. Slote is very proud of his "semi-Kripkean" account of how we fix the reference of moral terms, and tells us it has taken him five years to get it into the form it has in MS. I shall return later to its plausibility.

Slote sees his view as falling into the sentimentalist tradition in ethics (hence the second book's title), in particular as developing Hume's *Treatise* views about a sympathy-grounded morality, and in particular, for the account of moral judgment, Hume's words about how we warm to the warm-hearted person. MS is dedicated to Hume. Slote is also developing and amending the more recent feminist tradition of an ethics of care, where the emphasis on *empathic* care constitutes the amendment. He also mentions the Christian ethics of love or *agape* as a forerunner to his views. While agreeing with the early Gilligan that this way of conceiving of morality may be more natural to women than to men, he cites Jesus of Nazareth as well as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume and Smith, in addition to recent women such as Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, Virginia Held, Marilyn Friedman and myself, as those whose views he is developing (ECE: 3). But he claims he is the first (after Jesus?) to claim not just that concern for others is *part* of morality, but that, when taken to be based on empathy, it encompasses all of it. "A care-ethical approach makes sense across the whole range of normative and political issues that philosophers have sought to deal with." (ECE: 1) And not just makes sense of them, but, if Slote is right, makes better sense of them than can the Kantian rationalist, or those who favor a mixed approach, or even Hume himself. An ethics of empathy and care not merely supplements but, Slote thinks, should replace one of rights and justice. Slote shows how his approach would deal with some abortion issues, obligations to distant others, some deontological distinctions, the value of autonomy, objections to paternalism, and social justice. He also discusses practical reason, taken as a servant to sentiment and empathy-grounded fellow-feeling, the nature of moral approval (in MS), and (MS: Chapter 10) empathy in epistemology and science.

What exactly does Slote mean by empathy? He cites studies by C.D. Batson and Martin Hoffman about empathy in children, and Batson concentrated on their responses to the *suffering* of others. In ECE the relevant empathy seemed limited to our sharing of others' distress, including their greater distress at having caused, rather than merely allowed, harm to befall another. But in MS empathy includes sharing of joys as well as hurts, so is more like Hume's "sympathy", which leads us to rejoice with another as well as share her distress. Hume thought we could also come to share others' beliefs by sympathy. Slote, dropping the "pathos" in empathy, extends the notion to sharing not only others'

passions, but their motives to action, so empathy with agents becomes important to his account of approval. Adam Smith objected to the wide range of Humean sympathy with feelings, and thought we sympathize only with feelings we judge to have moral propriety, so moral judgment must precede sympathy, and cannot be dependent on it. (Slote says of him that he is no true sentimentalist.) Does Slote think we can in principle empathize with any human feeling, the rapist's lust as well as his victim's pain and outrage, the pornography-consumer's pleasure as well as the outrage of the feminist at this demeaning portrayal of women, the killer's blood-lust as well as his victim's terror, the slave owner's or patriarch's glory in power as well as their subjects' humiliation? If we can, then empathy does not reliably track approval. It is not just empathy, but empathy with agents' empathy, which Slote appeals to in his account of approval. He links not merely the warmth felt by the approver with the warm-hearted action she approves, but also the chill, felt by the disapprover, with the coldness of heart of the disapproved-of agent, as if the latter is almost an empathy with, a contagion from, the cold-hearted man's lack of empathy. Some killers, however, have hot, not cold, feelings as they kill, and the rapist and pornography-fancier will have warm rather than cold feelings. Hume thought all feelings either pleasant or unpleasant, and to feel with another who feels fear will be decidedly unpleasant, so "cold" rather than "warm". To approve of someone who feels with the quaking fearful one, and tries to calm her, seems to be to be "warmed" by what is a negative, unpleasant, shared cold feeling. Smith, unlike Hume, thought we are always pleased when we can sympathize with another, pleased in part at the propriety of the original feeling, necessary for our sympathy. Slote speaks of the "discordance" felt by the empathic person at another's lack of empathy, but the discordance appears also to be there when we warmly approve of the empathic person's sharing of another's cold dread.

Surprisingly little attention is given by Slote, even when discussing abortion, to the possibility of contradictory sympathies, to our need to balance our sympathies, to weigh our understanding of the poor mother's reluctance to bear a child she cannot properly care for with our empathy for the vulnerable fetus in her womb. Presumably he does think that our sympathy with the meat-eater's pleasure in his steak is greater than our sympathy with the terror of the steer in the slaughter sheds, since he fails to say that vegetarianism is an

obvious implication of the ethics of empathy. Nor does he make clear if it is only present people we can empathize with. We seem to be able to empathize with characters in a novel, and imaginatively to relive past persons' experiences, when we know of them. But if we believe, as I do, that we owe something to past persons, as well as to future persons, is that because we can empathize with past persons' hopes and struggles, and foresee those of future people? The latter are not yet determinate in nature, so it is unclear we can share their experience, but we certainly can have a concern for them, even if we cannot empathize with them in the way we can with our living children and grandchildren. Slote notes that we speak of caring about ideals like freedom, but says (ECE: 19) that is not the sort of caring he is speaking about. He is concerned only with empathic caring. (ECE: 16) Hume in the *Treatise* tried to extend the notion of sympathy from a response to sentient beings to responses to abstractions such as the public interest, but came to see the dubiousness of the notion of sympathy with the public interest, so replaced it, in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, with talk of our appreciation of social utility. We do care about social utility and the public interest, but cannot empathize with them, since they are not sentient things. If we really tried to empathize with all past and present suffering, we would lose our minds. Even those who deeply love a suffering person may find they must steel themselves against empathy with that person's extreme suffering, to be able to care for them. Care can lead us to dampen empathy. Wisely has nature ordained that it is only a few present persons with whom we let ourselves feel, though we can imagine what selected past people felt, and so can respond (futilely) to their distress, and to their character. Hume said we will feel more warmly about our faithful servant than about Marcus Brutus, but can correct our sentiments, or at least our language, so not necessarily judge her more virtuous. Our empathy with our servant can lead to action towards her, while we can do little for Brutus or Caesar, except praise or condemn them. Slote says too little about necessary limits to the range of our empathy, but seems to assume that, however extensive, it is with selected present actual people, not with past or future people. But if our obligations extend to past and future people, then they can not be reduced to our empathy with them, or to empathy with that empathy.

The first little book had a broad sweep, but Slote allowed there that some normative topics, such as our treatment of animals, had not been dealt with, and he says he hopes one day to turn to them. He also expressed dissatisfaction with how he had there dealt with metaethical issues.(ECE: 127) In the second book, it is metaethical issues, rather than normative ones, which get more extended treatment, in particular in forging a meaning link between moral terms and empathic response. On normative issues, MS mainly repeats what ECE had said. Another normative topic Slote should be planning to address is the morality of punishment, where, on the face of it, empathy might prevent rather than encourage us to incarcerate offenders, especially of those guilty of victimless crimes such as counterfeiting, where no empathy with victims counterbalances any with offenders, in the way that empathy with a fetus might counteract empathy with its reluctant mother. Although Slote claims empathy can explain our sense of justice, it is social justice he looks at, not criminal justice. The tender hearted may protest at what is meted out by the just judge, and as Hume pointed out, women tend to feel for those on their way to the scaffold. Hume did not admire this form of sentimentality, but Slote may, as he thinks women's greater capacity for empathy may make them morally superior to men, whose testosterone levels may make them aggressive rather than compassionate. (ECE: 73) He has a chapter in ECE on deontology, but does not address what role empathy has in determining how rule-breakers should be dealt with, nor even in determining what the rules should be. Indeed his understanding of deontology is peculiar: he looks in ECE not at the content of our rights and obligations, but at what wrongs we treat as worse than others, and (to my mind implausibly) thinks empathy, this time with agents rather than with patients, can explain why we think killing is worse than letting die, and more plausibly, why third trimester abortions are worse than first trimester ones, since it is easier for us to empathize with a developed fetus than with a "salamander-like" embryo, (salamanders cannot expect much from Slote when he does look at the ethics of our treatment of animals), and why breaking a promise to help is worse than failure to offer help. So although his initial claims in ECE sounded very ambitious, it turns out that he may not really be claiming there that empathy explains the *content* of morality, but rather that it can explain why, given that something such as causing death is seen as wrong, some cases of it are seen as worse than others. Or,

to be more accurate, in ECE he wavers on this matter. He is willing, in ECE Chapter 2, to “offer a criterion of right and wrong action based on the notion of empathetic caring for others,” namely “actions are wrong and contrary to moral obligation if, and only if they reflect or exhibit an absence of fully developed empathetic concern (or caring about) others on the part of the agent.” (ECE: 31) But, in his conclusion to ECE (127), he writes that he has, at that point, no idea how to define moral words in terms of empathy and that he is not happy with his earlier attempts at this. (ECE: 129, note 5) His reference there is to his “earlier published writings”, but his earlier chapters in ECE seemed to offer just such a criterion. So it remained unclear whether he believed, in ECE, that wrongness can be defined as lack of due empathy, or whether his was the weaker thesis, suggested in his treatment of deontology, that once we already know what is wrong, relative degrees of wrongness can be explained by relative lack of empathy. Then lack of empathy would be an aggravating factor, not the essence of wrongness. And, as he does not say, it is possible that empathy itself may sometimes be an excusing factor, if, say a tenderhearted jailor lets a prisoner escape. But in MS the strong thesis is again asserted, this time with more confident attention to the meaning we give to the key terms, “right” and “wrong”. “Moral goodness (or rightness) is whatever feelings of warmth directed at agents and delivered by mechanisms of empathy are caused by.” (MS: 61) This does claim not just that degree of wrongness, but wrongness itself, is what produces what he calls a “chill” (MS: 37), by the lack of normal empathy that a wrongful action shows. We are indeed chilled at the ruthless killer, but if the death he inflicts is painless, and unanticipated by the victim, it is scarcely empathy with the main victim which explains our chill. The dead are beyond feeling, so beyond our empathy. And we are also chilled by the heat of the one who delights, and takes erotic pleasure, in his act of killing. Should we be warmed by it, as some who watch pornographic films clearly are, that seems to make the displayed actions, by Slote’s criterion, right. “Warmth” is shared by too many feelings, in addition to approbation, to be adequate for Slote’s semantic purposes. Empathy enables the pornography-enjoyer’s warm pleasure, as well as its condemner’s chill, or his heated indignation. Warmth is too varied, and empathy is too flexible, for Slote’s purposes. Is it the fact that *most* of us do not empathize with the killer, or the rapist, which makes murder and rape wrong? But some do

empathize with them, or pornography would not flourish. Gilligan's empathic young women empathized with Heinz who steals the medicine for his children, when he cannot afford to pay for it, and some may empathize with the nurse, who without being begged to do so by the patient, from empathy administers euthanasia to a patient whose quality of life is very low. Our convictions about our rights, or about what we see as right, do not seem to me to have been shown by Slote to be reducible to our empathy, including our meta-empathy with empathic agents.

There are several ways in which empathy might be relevant to morality. One is that which Hume thought it had, that without some degree of it we would not be able to make moral judgments about those around us, then extend them to people we know about, including past people. He did not think empathy was sufficient for this purpose, nor did he think that it was necessary or sufficient for altruistic action. Another possible thesis about empathy is that it is the fundamental moral virtue, and so our moral judgments of each other reduce to estimates of our individual displays of empathy. Slote seems to accept this latter view, not just in MS, but in his discussion, in ECE, of whether women are morally superior to men, if they are more prone to empathy. But if this feminine feature makes women ill-equipped to be just judges, then they would not be morally superior. (The virtuous Cato, Hume says, was a "scourge to the wicked.") Even supposing it were plausible to think that hard heartedness were the only vice, in order to make moral judgments we still would need to have a dependable way of telling how soft or hard hearted another person is. Do we? Slote thinks beneficent action indicates empathy, but as Hume pointed out, one might feel with a person while not lifting a finger to help him, and some who do help may do so from a knowledge of the other's need which does not depend on empathy. If, as Hutcheson thought, altruism is the main virtue, then the empathy which can produce it would become central. But if Hume is right that justice and many other virtues are not forms of benevolence, then other features of our nature become important, and for justice in particular, our sense that, if we benefit from some particular scheme of cooperation, we should do what is expected of us by our fellow-cooperators. A third way empathy could be relevant to morality is if a higher-level form of it, empathy with empathy,

is crucial to our moral judgments. MS argues at length (Chapters 2 through 6) for such a view.

Slote sees himself alone among the “neo-sentimentalists” in using the same sentiments, empathy-derived ones, to explain both the meaning of moral terms and what their extension is. Like Hume, he offers both a meta-ethical theory and a normative one. But Hume saw felt disapprobation as directed not only at coldness and cruelty, but at stupidity and many other faults which were not faults of the heart. So Slote does, as he says, outdo Hume in his attempt to unify his meta-ethics with his normative ethics, under one umbrella, empathy. Hume remarks, of the egoist attempts to reduce all motivation to self-interest, that a false desire for simplicity drives such theorists, and that there is more real simplicity in accepting the apparent variety of human motives as real, than in straining to show them all as forms of one of them. He certainly did not think that the only thing the moral sentiment approves is itself, so did not unify his metaethics with his normative ethics in the way Slote attempts.

Slote says (MS: 1) that the choice of his title, *Moral Sentimentalism*, was a serious business. Empathy, however, is not a sentiment, but a spread of any sentiment from one person to another, so I am not so sure that Slote chose his later book’s title carefully enough. “The Ethics of Empathy” or “The Ethics of Communicated Sentiment”, would have been more accurate titles, and to that extent ECE is better-named than MS. It is also more modest, and less concerned with the ambitious and to my mind unpersuasive attempt to give the semantics of moral terms in terms of empathy, so that claims such as that cruelty is wrong come out necessarily true. As Hume pointed out, our moral vocabulary is designed for praise and blame, so the Scythian scalper would not describe his actions as cruel, but as brave and skilled. “Thick” moral terms, such as “cruel”, are emotive as well as descriptive terms, implying approval or disapproval. Hume reminds us of how we describe enemy generals as bloody-minded and perfidious, while our own commander is a model of virtue. “His treachery we call policy: His cruelty is an evil inseparable from war.” (T: 348)

Had Slote referred to empathy in his latest book’s title, could he still have dedicated it to Hume? Hume was certainly a sentimentalist in ethics. But he did not think sympathy a sentiment, nor that the sympathy-dependent sentiment which is needed to discern virtue



was itself the only virtue, so, for him, no one psychological phenomenon plays the role Slote has given to empathy. Slote, like Hutcheson, tries to reduce all virtue to benevolence, and not just benevolence but empathy-grounded or bleeding heart benevolence. St Theresa of Avila would have been a suitable dedicatee, for Slote's version of morality is the Christian one, that the only commandment is to love one's neighbor as oneself, to bear one another's burdens, even though each still bears her own burden, so burdens get multiplied by the sharing. (Actually Slote goes beyond Christianity, since he thinks there is no obligation to care for oneself, but that our duties are self/other asymmetric.) Hume rejected this Christian version of morals, since he thought many virtues, justice included, let alone the natural abilities, and those that make a person "great" rather than "good", do not reduce to benevolence, that some forms of benevolence do as much harm as good, and that there are many virtues which show in proper self-concern, rather than concern for others. But since our sympathies are strongest for those closest to us, he did not think sympathy enough to determine rightness, since it is biased in a way that true morality is not. Nor was he as confident as Slote is that feeling with others reliably leads to benevolent action. Empathy is neither necessary nor sufficient for beneficence, if Hume is right, and beneficence is only one virtue, among the 67 he named. Others are due pride, equity, good sense, serenity, endurance, wisdom and courage, which seem to have little to do with empathy, and he includes a large class of virtues, like serenity, agreeable to oneself, or, like caution and prudence, useful to self, as well as all the virtues agreeable and useful to others. (Many virtues, of course, like wisdom, patience and enterprise, serve both self and others.)

Hume thought our fundamental moral capacity, as far as judging what is virtuous is concerned, was not our partial sympathy, but rather its correction from a "general point of view," giving rise to our capacity to take a special pleasure in character traits which are welcome to all, because they benefit "the party of humankind", and so are approved by "the sentiment of humanity". Compassion is only one such virtue, whereas Slote makes it the central one. As for moral motivation, Hume appeals not merely to our concern for others, but also to such things as our pride, our gratitude, our concern for reputation, and to our sense of a common interest with others. For this last, empathy is not needed, merely discernment of interest.

Among the virtues are what Hume called the artificial virtues, which consist in obedience to rules telling us what our and others' rights are, rules adopted from a sense of common interest. There he raised his famous puzzle about what the virtuous motive is in a person who repays a loan to a "seditious bigot". Empathy would likely be with the borrower, not the loaner, in this case, yet justice demands that loans be repaid. Slote writes dismissively of Hume's concept of social artifice, and implausibly thinks empathy can explain what is wrong with theft. (ECE: 54, note 14) Gilligan's young women were willing to steal the medicine their children needed, so their empathy did not prevent stealing. Hume's account tells us what *counts* as theft, as well as what is wrong with it, since that theft is *prima facie* wrong is a necessary truth. Property rights, and promissory rights, Hume claims, have to be invented before they can be respected, and the former differ from society to society. Slote sees Hume to be neglecting "a central deontological issue", that between doing harm and allowing harm. But because of his own fixation on this distinction, which our ordinary moral thinking accepts, and his optimistic view that empathy with agents can explain it, he himself never really addresses the question of which harms are wrongs, violation of rights, so why killing and stealing are wrongings. Killing may not hurt its main victim, nor theft from a rich man much harm him, and not all hurtings are wrong. I may be hurt and even harmed by my love for a certain person not being returned, but my non-lover has not wronged me. If there is a right to be loved, it is only infants who possess it. The ethics of care will encourage us to show some sort of concern for all those around us, but cannot easily show which hurtings and harmings are wrongings. We at present are considering which of our environment-harming activities should be taken as wrongings, and in so doing, are proposing a new social artifice, something we all should contribute to, for the sake of humanity, and not just for those, such as our grandchildren and their friends, whom we know and can empathize with. Slote, without acknowledging it, takes over quite a lot from the ethics of justice, which does tell us which harmings are wrongings. Slote has not shown how appeal to empathy can either explain our duties to past and future persons, or generate a theory of rights, and so of obligations.

One of Slote's earlier books, *Morals from Motives*, agreed with Hume that it is always some inner state leading to an action which is where moral virtue is to be found, and

also agreed with him that, with benevolent actions, this will be found in their motive. But now he places the virtue not in the will or motive, but in the fellow feeling which he thinks reliably leads to benevolent motivation. (If this tie with benevolence is essential, then it alone will rule out empathy with past persons, beyond the reach of our benevolence or malice.) He allows that sometimes we do things for others from a concern for them that does not necessarily stem from sharing their distress, merely from knowing of it. Good nurses alleviate their patients' distress, if they can, but might well be incapacitated if they really felt what their patients are feeling. When Slote contrasts empathy with sympathy, he notes that the latter often does lead to altruistic action, so it is unclear to me why it is empathy, rather than considerateness, a more general concern for others, which he thinks is so important. But he is explicit that he wishes to "go beyond mere caring to the idea of empathic caring". (ECE: 16) Hume thought what he called sympathy, which does include empathy, to be a fact about our nature, and one on which our moral sense depends, but he saw empathy as just one virtue, one relevant to moral "goodness", rather than to, for example, the "greatness" of the wise legislator, or the wit of the welcome companion. One can, he says, be "too good", too tenderhearted. Hume did not see sympathy as limited to sharing the *distress* of others, since he thought good cheer just as naturally contagious as misery, and thought sharing others' admiration and joy as well as their resentment and sorrow helped us appreciate the effect of particular character traits, such as cheerfulness and moroseness, on persons affected by those with these traits, and on them themselves. In MS Slote does extend the scope of empathy to joys as well as sorrows, and in particular to an agent's feeling about what she is doing, but he does not tell us how promiscuous our empathy should be, whether the sadist's and the rapist's pleasure should be shared, and then taken into account in our moral judgments. If we do take them into account, it seems to make their actions worse, not better, so being aware of another's feelings affects our moral judgments in several ways.

Although he presents himself as what might be termed a bleeding heart liberal, in favor of progressive taxation, there is a certain inbuilt conservatism in Slote's appeal to preexistent moral intuitions about what are the greater wrongs. He tries to map the meaning he is proposing for moral terms like "right", in terms of degree of empathy at the agent's

degree of empathy, against the extension of the term that ordinary people in our society give it. Is this what meta-ethics always does? Ordinary Scythians approved of large scalp collections, so, if Slote is right, must have empathized only with other Scythians, not, or much less, with those whom they scalped. Facts about empathy are not fixed, otherwise women's emancipation, and the emancipation of other slaves, would not have taken so long. Empathy is a poor basis for a reflective version of morals, since it can be socially manipulated, and the better moral theories appeal to something less obviously fluid. Those like Hume and Mill were less concerned than Slote to rock no-one's boat. The only moral intuitions Hume appeals to are our *reflective* approbations and disapprobations of the character traits that people exhibit. He was quite willing to revise his contemporaries' unreflective moral judgments about for example the monastic virtues. His appeal to humanitarian concerns trumped any respect for common moral opinion. He spoke out against slavery before slavery became illegal, and I have elsewhere claimed, advised women on how to claim their rights. If extensiveness of empathy were proposed as a criterion of moral *progress*, I would have less quarrel with Slote. He thinks moral judgments are objective, yet surely knows that his are different from those of earlier slave owners, or those who opposed giving the vote to women. Moral progress seems to lie in revisions of those judgments we take to be sound. When he looks at our duty to help others, Slote underwrites common conviction that we should favor those closest to us, rejecting the consequentialist revisions of people like Peter Singer. By contrast, Hume says that our concentration on those close to us has been wisely ordained by nature, to prevent our altruistic sentiments being "dissipated or lost, for want of a proper limited object". As Hume saw things, we *all* do better if we all first look after those closest to us, and the very closest is oneself. But rightly are we concerned with what is best for all. And Hume thought there was cross-species sympathy, so animals get into Humean ethics in a way it is so far unclear that they do into Slote's. A large class of virtues, for Hume, are those traits agreeable or useful to self. But Slote is avowedly "partialist", accepting of the natural bias of empathy (but not that of natural selfishness?) without looking at how, if at all, this benefits all. The concept of a "general point of view", vital to Hume's version of morality, plays no role in Slote's. This makes his view implausible, at least to those of us who do

think we owe a duty of due concern to all, animals included, and agree with Hume that impartiality is a virtue.

The acid test for Slote's ethics of empathy is whether it can account for reflective convictions that rights, such as the right to property, should usually be respected. Hume thought that, once a convention of property is accepted, we do naturally sympathize with owners' indignation if their property is seized. But since Slote rejects Hume's view that it is custom, or social artifice, which establishes property rights, he should, to convince us of his empathy ethic, show us that we can tell, by empathy, what belongs to whom. He has not even claimed to have done this. All he claims is that, where some right, such as the right to life, is already granted, he can explain why some breaches of it are worse than others. But what established a right in the first place? Hume has no good answer to this with the right to life, but nor has Slote with either it or the right to one's property.

ECE was marred, not only by inconclusive arguments, but by vacillation over what exactly was being claimed. The strong thesis, espoused in MS, that morality reduces to a demand for empathy, is certainly not established in either book, and it is unclear exactly what weaker thesis might be the one on which Slote is sometimes falling back, at least in ECE. His excitement there at the possibility of empathizing with the fetus seems to have carried him away. (ECE: 16) Yes, perhaps one can empathize more easily with the third term fetus than with the first term one, and with the cat's pain more than with the worm's. But so what? To step on a worm and so kill it may not strike us as as bad as driving over a cat, but that seems more to do with our prior greater attachment to cats than to worms than with any fact about the fixed limits of our empathy. Slave owners did not worry much about pain or harm to their slaves. Someone who did love a pet worm, or salamander, would be just as distressed at killing it as someone who runs over her cat, or her valuable slave. Facts about sentimental reactions to harmings are poor evidence for conclusions about wrongings. Otherwise every time we hurt someone, perhaps by criticizing their writings, we should seriously think we have wronged them. Have I wronged Slote by a critical review of these two books? I think not, as long as I have stated his views accurately and criticized them fairly. But then I take justice more seriously than he appears to. We may, as I have in the past claimed, need more than justice, but that does not mean we can

let any sentiment take the place of a sense of justice. Slote has given an ethics of empathy a run for its money, and that was worth doing. I think what his attempt has shown is that it needs supplementation, just as compassion, as a virtue, needs the other 66 virtues Hume thought we recognize, even to do its own work properly. If allied with stupidity, impatience, and foolhardiness, empathy will achieve little. And to aim to share everyone's feelings, both of sorrow and of joy, is to guarantee emotional overload, as well as to neglect virtues like good sense. Empathy is important, but we need more than empathy, to do justice to morality.

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