

## REPLY TO NODDINGS, COTTINGHAM, DRIVER, AND BAIER

**Michael Slote**

I am grateful to Nel Noddings, John Cottingham, Julia Driver, and Annette Baier for their comments on my work and will discuss their comments in the order just indicated.

### **Nel Noddings**

Nel Noddings and I seem, somewhat surprisingly, to agree more on substance than on nomenclature. She is much more reluctant to use the term “empathy” than I clearly am, and at one point, while indicating that she prefers the term “sympathy”, she mentions that many social scientists use the term “empathy” the way I do. What she doesn’t mention, however, is that, despite the etymological complexities of the matter, *current (American) usage* also favors this widespread academic usage. If you ask ordinary people/Americans which of “I feel your pain” and “I feel sorry for you because of all the pain you’re in” corresponds to empathy and which to sympathy, they say that the former refers to empathy and the latter to sympathy. And that is the way I have used the term myself. However, I buy into the empathy-altruism hypothesis that many psychologists of moral development accept, and that hypothesis holds that (the development of) empathy is requisite to and helps to sustain sympathy, compassion, and altruism more generally.

Noddings also helpfully notes that the process of induction by which a child’s empathy can be evoked and strengthened by a parent is more likely to succeed if there is a good relationship between parent and child, and with this I totally agree. (It’s not a point that I made in *The Ethics of Care and Empathy—ECE*.) And her idea that attention typically precedes the arousal of empathy in particular situations seems very promising—though more needs to be said about how this works.

Noddings goes on to speak of cases in which our empathic tendencies are counteracted by anger with or disgust at what another person says or does. We often are less empathic and less empathically concerned with other people who, say, harm or offend

us or those we love/like, but the moral criterion of empathic caring can accommodate such facts by saying that in those instances a lesser degree of helpfulness (or even, in some instances, certain forms of retaliation or punishment) are morally in order. The psychological literature discusses cases of this sort, and it is thought that the tendency to get angry with and be less helpful toward those, e. g., who hurt people we love is a result of empathy itself. In such cases, the person who does less doesn't, therefore, evince a lack of empathic concern for others and isn't morally criticizable. Similarly, a person who directly harms me naturally makes me angry and less willing to help them, but since (as I mentioned in ECE) empathy normally develops *against a background of persisting self-concern*, the fact that I do less for the person who has harmed me again doesn't show any lack of fully empathic concern for others. I should mention that I talk about these particular issues in my more recent book, *Moral Sentimentalism*—MS (Oxford University Press, 2010, esp. p.99).

Noddings subsequently returns to the subject of attention and, following Iris Murdoch, claims that (adopting) a loving or caring attitude can help us see another person better and more accurately. "It is not," she says, "simply a matter of understanding the other in some entirely objective way. From the perspective of care ethics, it is a matter of seeing the other in the best possible light." [p.11]<sup>1</sup> But I think we need to make some distinctions here. Trying to see someone in the best possible light can help us to appreciate them more accurately if we have (as in the example Noddings borrows from Murdoch) an initial tendency toward devaluing or underestimating them. But as I argue in MS, chapter 10, empathy can also help us to be (more) objective in cases where we don't start off prejudiced, but simply have our own initial opinions or attitudes. The epistemically objective person is someone who, having such opinions or attitudes, is willing and able to empathize with the differing opinions or attitudes of others; or so, at least, I argued in the final chapter of MS. On the other hand, there are times when objectivity isn't called for at all: we expect someone who loves another person to be epistemically prejudiced in their favor, to be less willing to believe ill of them than an objective or impartial judge would be,

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<sup>1</sup> Page references in square brackets are to the papers of this symposium.

and this is part of what it *is* to love another person. So a care ethics that recommends love is in effect also recommending against being completely objective, and that makes a lot of sense.

Noddings then discusses our tendency to care more about those whose distress we perceive than about those whose distress we merely know about (she puts this in terms of distance, but I argue in ECE that perceivability is morally closer to the bone). She says she agrees with me that this depends on empathy, but wants to stress evolutionary biology as a means to understanding this phenomenon in a way that I haven't myself done. What I *have* wanted to stress, however, is the connection between empathy and our moral concepts. In ECE and at much greater length in MS, I argue that empathy enters into our moral concepts and that this helps explain why—and justify claims to the effect that—it is morally worse, other things being equal, not to help someone one sees to be in trouble than not to help someone whose difficulties one only knows at second hand. But, of course, evolutionary biology can help us better understand the emergence of moral concepts.

Noddings concludes her comments by mentioning empathic exhaustion (what psychologists sometimes call compassion fatigue). This is a topic on which a great deal more needs to be said that was not said in ECE. For example, if empathy is the criterion of morality, what do we say about cases where someone's empathy is exhausted and they end up being less helpful to others than we think one morally ought to be? This can happen to a nurse or doctor; and MS argues (ch.7) that our moral evaluations may depend on when and how the debilitating exhaustion occurs. If a young nurse was never told about compassion fatigue in nursing school, she may have a moral excuse the first time such a thing happens to her. But after that the excuse goes away, because a genuinely caring person who suffers compassion fatigue and ends up for a while not helping those they are supposed to help will take steps not to let this happen again in the future—e.g., by “budgeting” their concerned involvement and their caring activities in the future. A sentimentalist care ethics can account for what we believe about such cases.

### **John Cottingham**

I think John Cottingham underestimates the resistance that many ethicists would put up to

acknowledging a central place for empathy in the moral life, and the fact that we agree as to that centrality actually represents, I think, a large area of common philosophical belief. But Cottingham questions whether empathy or empathic caring can really constitute the “foundation stone” of morality, and it is important to consider those doubts.

Cottingham wonders, to begin with, whether the foundations I have laid are really distinct (enough) from those utilitarianism provides or seeks to provide for morality, and in this connection he mentions the issue of whether it would be right to prohibit neo-Nazi hate speech in a town (Skokie, Illinois) where there were many Holocaust survivors. He rightly notes that my treatment of the case accords basically with what a utilitarian would say about it (and differs from what Kantian liberals want to say about it), but I am a bit baffled about why he thinks that calls the distinctiveness of my empathic caring approach into question. After all, even Kantians and Rawlsians agree with utilitarianism about many kinds of examples. Cottingham says that consequences rather than empathy are doing the explanatory/justificatory work in my treatment of the Skokie case, but part of my criticism of the liberal approach was to note their lack of consideration, of empathy, for the Holocaust survivors. That doesn't sound like consequentialism to me.

Cottingham then moves on to my discussion of the case of miners who are trapped underground. I say that our empathic tendencies will lead us to want to save those miners rather than spend the same money it would cost us to do so on safety equipment that would save more lives in the future. But I then add that if the number of future lives to be saved by installing safety equipment is enormously greater than the number of miners who are now trapped underground, the sheer numbers will or might engage our empathy strongly enough to make us prefer to install the equipment rather than save the presently-trapped miners. Cottingham says that this is a concession, even a caving in, to consequentialism, but that judgment baffles me once again, and a parallel example may help to explain why I am baffled. Most deontologists who hold it would be wrong to kill one person to save five also believe it could be right to kill one to save some much larger number of people from certain death. This doesn't make them into consequentialists, and neither does my concession, my insistence, that at a certain point sheer numbers can outweigh the empathic force of contemporaneity constitute any kind of acceptance of consequentialism. My insistence that

contemporaneity makes a (some) basic difference to our empathic reactions and to our justified moral judgments stakes out a position that is clearly different from and in many cases opposed to the dictates of impartialist/utilitarian consequentialism.

Cottingham then takes up my treatment of deontology. He questions whether my empathic approach can really help us understand what is wrong with stealing from rich people or corporations. After all, even if the robber causes some distress, that distress may be minimal, so one may wonder how my approach can explain what is wrong with such theft. But I think we are empathically somewhat averse to causing/inflicting (as opposed to “merely” allowing) small amounts of distress or pain, so I don’t think the empathy approach is unable to call such stealing wrong. However, Cottingham may be thinking that on my view the stealing, even if wrong, is a morally less serious wrong than it actually is and is generally thought to be, and if he is, then I have to disagree with him. We don’t think stealing small amounts from rich people or corporations is morally as serious as stealing from those who really need the money, and my empathic approach precisely allows us to make that sort of distinction. Cottingham also says that we are likely to be more distressed when someone loses his property as a result of a preventable flood than when (and if) they are burglarized, and notes our belief that the latter is (nonetheless) considered the greater moral offense. But this doesn’t work against my empathy-based account of deontology, because it shifts from the point of view of an agent to that of a spectator. As a spectator, the damage done by a flood may be more upsetting than that done by a burglar, but as agents we all are or should be more reluctant to burgle than to allow a small flood or burglary to happen because it would take too much effort, say, to prevent it.

Cottingham also says that my phrase “empathically averse” sounds like a “logical hybrid” between psychological and moral notions, and that makes him wonder whether my idea that we are “empathically more averse” to causing harm than to allowing it can really help explain moral deontology. But I think a (re)consideration of what (following psychologist Martin Hoffman in his *Empathy and Moral Development*, Cambridge University Press, 2000) I say in ECE about “inductive discipline” might help allay his worries. If one calls a child’s attention to the harm or pain they have caused another child, they can be made to feel bad (a kind of rudimentary guilt) about what they have done, and

if one does this on several occasions, the child can become more empathic with others and develop a psychological resistance to future harming. This whole psychological process doesn't require any use or mentioning of moral notions (like saying "it is wrong to hurt people"), and the psychological resistance that is thereby induced is just the kind of thing I mean by "empathic aversion". Cottingham also says (more generally) that it is possible to be empathically less engaged by what is morally more serious, but I don't think this causes any problems for my approach. Some people are empathically incomplete: they feel for their own family, for example, but not for other people; and, of course, such a person (someone in the Mafia) can feel empathically less engaged by the killing of strangers than by forgetting to take his child to the circus. On my view, the standard for moral evaluation is fully developed empathic concern for others, and I think *that* sort of concern does line up with our considered moral judgments. (There is also the question of what to say about cases in which the fully empathic person's empathy temporarily flags or fails—but I have already said something about this in responding to Nel Noddings, and the issue is discussed at much greater length in MS, chapters 6 and 7.)

Cottingham goes on to express doubts about my treatment of the obligation to respect people's autonomy, and it is clear that we differ very deeply about what respect involves. He says that "to respect someone is to allow them to pursue their projects *even when you utterly fail to empathize with them.*" [p.15] Such tolerance is, he thinks, a "true virtue", but I beg to disagree. Following Susan Brison, I say in ECE (p.65n.) that this kind of tolerance is widely overestimated as a virtue—and I believe that the greater virtue and/or respect consists in or involves actually *listening to and hearing* what those who disagree with one have to say. It cannot be fully respectful not to be willing and able to understand things from other people's points of view. Like many others, Cottingham sees those who deny religious freedoms as trampling on independently established or justifiable rights, but in my view what is wrong with that denial involves a human failure of empathy and sympathy. And that actually strikes me (perhaps this isn't surprising) as the morally more humane way of looking at the issues.

Cottingham speaks of a general reservation he has about sentimentalist care ethics, given the gap it seems to allow between psychological descriptions of empathic tendencies

and “moral or normative facts about how we should behave.” [p.16] And he illustrates his worry by reference to my discussion of the difference between killing at close hand (as in the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War) and killing via aerial bombardment. But Rita Manning has convinced me that the relevant issues here are more complex than my discussion allowed (Cottingham mentions similar considerations); and I now don’t know what should be said about the specific moral issues about killing in wartime that I discussed in ECE. (A plausible moral theory sometimes has its work cut out for it.) But the general point he makes about a gap between psychological hypothesis and moral evaluation certainly needs to be addressed, and as he himself indicates, the main worry here concerns how our psychological feelings and tendencies can be(come) normative. Cottingham sees that, as a sentimentalist, I don’t have to argue that moral claims are *rationaly* binding (common sense doesn’t really take them to be so); but since I do claim that moral claims bind independently of the wishes or desires of those who are bound, he wants to know how that can be possible in sentimentalist terms. My answer that the sentimentalist standard of morality is the fully empathic individual, so that a less empathic person can have a moral obligation to do what he or she has no particular desire to do, doesn’t fully satisfy him. He wonders how the feelings someone else has or could have can have authority over me. Again, however, we have to be careful about the idea of authority. I don’t have to claim that moral norms have a rational authority, and in fact I don’t believe that any notion specifically of authority is necessarily crucial to questions of moral validity and normativity. For example, Cottingham thinks that the sentimentalist may need to invoke a notion of moral authority to the effect that fully empathic feelings “ought to be felt” [p.18], but I have strong doubts about whether the sentimentally-inclined have or need to have such thoughts, and in fact I find it difficult to make clear sense of what such thoughts actually amount to.

But how, then, do I allow for normative claims, based in facts about empathy, that validly apply to individuals who aren’t empathically motivated? At the end of the book I sketch an answer to this question (one that I developed at great length subsequently in *Moral Sentimentalism*). I argue there that we have reason to think empathy plays a role in our (understanding of) moral concepts and judgments/utterances. But then, if one needs

empathy in order to be able to claim, fully, that things are right or wrong, that would help explain why moral judgments are inherently motivating, and it would also move us toward an explanation of how there can be moral obligations independently of whether a give person is empathic enough to want to adhere to them. If the reason why someone lacks empathy for his daughter is that he is or is close to being a psychopath who lacks empathy for *anyone*, then that person isn't capable of making moral judgments or (fully) understanding the valid normative claim that he is under a moral obligation vis-à-vis his daughter; but that is no more problematic than a blind person's being unable to (fully) understand valid claims about objective redness. That inability doesn't undercut the value and objectivity of what others who possess the concept of redness can say making use of that concept.

On the other hand, the man who has no desire to help his daughter because he is preoccupied, say, with a second marriage and a new family can presumably make moral judgments. And if he is empathic enough for that, he can presumably be brought to recognize his obligation to help her. In that case a desire to help her can perhaps be (re)awakened via the same psychological/empathic processes that allowed him to have moral concepts in the first place. I say more about this in MS, but the questions John Cottingham has raised here are certainly important, and it is clearly important for the sentimentalist—or any theorist of morality—to be able to answer them.

At the end of his comments, Cottingham allows that the sentimentalist can claim that empathy is “the ultimate value which serves to ground other [moral] values.” [p.18] That is something I do indeed claim and want to claim, but it perhaps helps if one sees that semantic considerations about the role of empathy in moral concepts reinforce sentimentalist normative claims about the ultimate and pervasive role of empathy in making actions right or wrong. Cottingham thinks I and we all should be more open to the possibility that there is no single major ultimate moral/normative value or standard, but philosophers have reason, other things being equal, to prefer a unified and unifying approach, and I believe ECE and MS together give us some reason to see empathy as helping us to make all the plausible and uncontroversial moral distinctions we customarily make. This puts my approach, as Cottingham notes, in league with the Christian ethic of



love (though that ethic is impartialist, and empathy works partialistically); and as he also points out, the appeal of such differing forms of sentimentalism doesn't have to presuppose religious belief or piety. ECE argues, in effect, for a kind of secular sentimentalism that picks up on and highlights our own deeply human empathic tendencies and resources. This constitutes a challenging systematic alternative to ethical rationalism, and I think we both agree that such an approach deserves to be developed and/or explored further in the future.

### **Julia Driver**

I am grateful to Julia Driver for raising the issue of autism so forcefully at the beginning of her comments. I have recently been feeling the need to say more than ECE (or MS) says about the moral capabilities of people with autism or Asperger's syndrome, and I am going to take the opportunity to do that here. But I don't propose to follow the exact contours of Driver's own very interesting discussion, but will try to draw a picture of the central issues in my own way. Similarly, my subsequent response to other aspects or parts of Driver's comments will not respond to her discussion point by point, but will in any event seek to answer the issues she raises in a somewhat systematic way.

But first to a misunderstanding that we can use to shape consequent discussion. Driver speaks of "the sort of empathic skills Slote insists on," but my discussion in ECE precisely *distinguishes* between empathic skills and the question whether someone is capable of empathy. (Look carefully at the passage Driver quotes from pp.126-127 of my book.) Someone with Asperger's may be incapable of picking up cues from their human environment, but that may also be true, to a large extent, of a blind person, and I think most people would agree that the lack or loss of sight(edness) doesn't make one a less empathic person. That assumption, at any rate, seems very plausible to me, so I think the issue of how morally important empathy is can't be resolved by focusing on issues of defective cognitive/perceptual processing.

How, then, can it be resolved in the particular case of autistic or, for that matter, blind individuals? Well, blind people can be read to or can themselves read via the Braille method, and is there any reason why such a person shouldn't "feel the pain" of some fictional character who is vividly portrayed to them in a book? This is not the usual kind of

emotional contagion, the kind that people discussing empathy most frequently focus on, but I think there should be no doubt that empathy of an emotional(ly engaged) kind is involved here, and the question then arises why such a thing couldn't or doesn't occur with high-functioning autistic individuals. If it can or does, then there is every reason to regard many autistic people as capable of empathy, and the account of moral motivation and sensitivity offered in ECE would then regard them as differing in an important way from psychopaths. As Driver notes, psychopaths are good at getting inside people's heads, but they don't have the kind of emotional reactions that occur when we feel someone's pain. So if we tie the capacity for morality to that kind of receptive emotional capability, we may be able to say that autistic people are capable of morality in a way that psychopaths aren't. And my kind of sentimentalism would be more than content to make this sort of distinction on these sorts of grounds.

Of course, what we have just said depends on the assumption that autistic people can become emotionally involved in someone's fate independently of the usual perceptual cues, but we are in fact not limited to literary examples if we want to show that autistic people can be capable of empathic emotional involvement. In my response to John Cottingham, I mentioned the process or "technique" of inductive discipline by which parents can get children to become more empathic and caring. The parents get the child to focus on the pain or harm they have caused another child, and this will make most children feel bad about what they have done. And I can think of no reason why something like this may not also be possible for many autistic children. Such children may not pick up on the usual perceptual cues, but if their parents can explain things to them, then they may possibly be brought to understand the pain or harm that they have—perhaps inadvertently, or perhaps in anger—caused another child. And if learning about this makes them feel bad about what they have done, then they are capable of a kind of rudimentary guilt that psychopaths presumably never feel. So if some or many autistic people can be brought to feel and understand things in this way, I think there is no reason to deny them a capacity for empathy and for morality. But if they somehow turn out *not* to be capable of feeling bad/guilty about things they have done, then my kind of sentimentalism can and should feel comfortable with denying them a fully developed capacity for morality. To be sure, they

may conform to social, legal, and moral norms out of a desire to fit in with or please those around them, but if that is the most they are capable of desiring or feeling vis-à-vis other people and their surrounding circumstances, then surely there is a point to denying that they have complete(ly) moral motivation. And moral sentimentalism has no reason, I think, to shy from such a conclusion. But let me now consider some other issues Driver raises.

Driver notes my assumption (following Hoffman) that one can empathize with (the condition or situation of) someone who doesn't yet know they have (say) terminal cancer, and she says that this involves a different kind of empathy from the empathy that works via emotional contagion. But even if the cancer victim doesn't yet have any negative feelings that can spread via contagion, one can still be empathically/emotionally receptive vis-à-vis their situation. And such receptivity (univocally) defines the basic kind of empathy I think is necessary to morality and absent in psychopaths. It can occur when someone's actual pain spreads by contagion to or into others, but it also occurs when someone empathically identifies with the woes of some purely fictional character or when we empathically/receptively feel the badness of the situation of someone who doesn't (yet) know how bad their situation is. *Pace* Driver, there is only one fundamental kind of empathy involved here, even if some of its instances require greater cognitive/emotional maturity than do others.

But doesn't such empathy have its moral limits? Doesn't it frequently have to be corrected if we are to do what is morally right, and doesn't that show the limits of an approach like my own that puts so much weight on empathy? Driver certainly thinks so, and she proposes various rational and moral mechanisms that might be capable of doing the work that she thinks empathy unaided cannot perform. But such moves don't, I think, give sufficient credit to what empathy (in some sense) on its own can do. The way to correct morally misguided or inadequate empathy is not, I believe, with new and different mechanisms or procedures, but with more or more thoroughgoing empathy. Let me explain.

As I mentioned in my reply to John Cottingham, some people feel (receptive) empathy with the joys and sorrows of those they know or are intimate with, but feel very little toward mere strangers or (distant) groups of people they have very little knowledge of. And such people will often or sometimes act wrongly because of their complete bias in

favor of those they know. But Hoffman points out that as we mature, we become capable of empathy with distant groups or individuals, and it seems to me (and has seemed to others) that an adequate moral education should involve empathically sensitizing individuals to issues and people beyond their immediate environment. I spend a lot of time in ECE and MS describing how this can occur, and so I think that the best corrective to morally objectionable empathic biases is a larger or deeper training or education in empathy. To be sure, this process is more than likely to leave us preferring our own folk to people in distant groups, but if it leaves us with substantial and genuine empathic concern for the latter, it may arguably have accomplished all it needs to accomplish in order to produce or create (or whatever the right word is) morally decent, caring individuals.

The case of the triage physician that Driver describes is just a more complex instance of what I have just been saying. The moral distinctions and clarifications that bear on such cases are in fact very similar to what one needs to say about compassion fatigue, an issue that I have described briefly above, in my replies to Noddings and Cottingham, and that I have discussed at great length in MS (chapter 7). Given considerations of length, I hope I may at this point just refer the reader to that discussion. But let me also mention one final consideration that may be relevant to Driver's comments and to her doubts about empathy. Driver speaks of moral judgment as capable of exercising a corrective influence on our limited or biased empathic tendencies, and she gestures in the direction of a somewhat Humean theory of such judgment (or "utterances"). But MS offers a general account of moral concepts/judgments in terms of the idea of second-order empathy, empathy with someone's abundance or lack of empathic concern for others, and I believe such an account might help allay some of Driver's worries about the adequacy of empathy-based moral sentimentalism.

### **Annette Baier**

Annette Baier's review of ECE and of my more recent MS is marred by some *ad hominem*s; but she raises some important issues, and where she misunderstands what I have written, I think it is worth indicating what the misunderstanding is or involves.

Early on in her review, Baier says that "[i]n ECE the relevant empathy seemed

limited to our sharing of others' distress....But in MS empathy includes sharing of joys as well as hurts." [p.29] But although ECE focused on negative feelings, I never said or intended to say that empathy is limited to such feelings. Moreover, I made it very clear in both ECE and MS that I follow Martin Hoffman in assuming that we can empathize not just with *feelings*, but also with someone's fortunate or unfortunate *condition* or *situation*, and in the final chapter of the later book, I even speak of empathy with or for someone's state of ignorance or intellectual point of view. Baier then asks whether we can empathize, say, with the rapist's pleasure at raping, and that is a very interesting question. There is something very cold-hearted about the way a rapist can feel pleasure "at the expense" of his victim, so on my view, a normal empathic person might momentarily feel the rapist's pleasure, but will also be empathically chilled by what it shows about the rapist's cold-heartedness and thus disapprove of it. And disapproval of and anger with someone who hurts others clearly tend to interfere with empathically sharing or continuing to share their (pleasurable) feelings. In addition, and as I mentioned above, our empathic concern for someone's welfare diminishes if we think they have harmed us or people we care about (see MS, p.99), and so (I hold that) a normal person will feel lessened empathic concern for the welfare of a rapist or perhaps even none at all.

Baier goes on to claim that the rapist (or pornography-fancier) has warm feelings toward his victim, but here I am somewhat perplexed. Such a person will derive pleasure from raping and seeing their victim's reaction, but that isn't necessarily the same as warmth or warm feeling. As I point out in MS, the warmth we feel at contemplating a friend's warmth toward her friend can be "teary-eyed" and not necessarily or predominantly pleasurable. So I don't agree with Baier or think there is any reason to hold that the rapist has warm feelings toward or about his victim. However, Baier also points out that the rapist can feel hot and excited when he rapes, and I certainly wouldn't want to deny that. But there is a cold-heartedness, nonetheless, in or about the way the rapist views his victims—e.g., in the case of serial rapists there is presumably no guilt or sadness after the fact, and there is all along a chilling underlying lack of (non-instrumental) concern for the welfare of their victims. On the theory MS defends, that explains why we normally disapprove of the rapist and find their actions (at the very least) morally wrong and bad. Baier's final point on this

topic is that when we approve of an individual who feels empathic concern for someone who is (say) fearful, we share the fear and therefore have a cold feeling rather than a warm one. But even if we momentarily share cold fear the way we can momentarily share the pleasure of a sadist, our knowledge of the fearful person's presumably dangerous situation can arouse our agential empathic concern for their welfare and thus our warmth, and an observer can clearly be warmed by and approve of that aroused warm agential concern. None of this entails, nor should it, that the observer will be warmed by or approve of the agent's mere sharing of the fearful person's cold fear. So I don't think there is any particular problem here for the sentimentalism proposed in MS.

Baier next asserts that I don't say much about the need to balance the (empathic) sympathies we may feel in different directions; but this ignores ECE's discussion (p.68) of the Skokie example, where we have to weigh the feelings of neo-Nazis against those of Holocaust survivors. I indicate there how empathy can play a role in resolving such issues, and in both ECE and MS I speak of several other cases where a balancing of sympathies or empathies has to occur. Baier also notes, quite correctly, that I haven't said much about moral vegetarianism and claims that my view commits me to that doctrine. And perhaps it does. But I think the matter is more complicated for sentimentalism than Baier supposes and in any event hope to be able to discuss this whole issue at some point in the future. (Indeed, I think the general question of our obligations to animals is a very difficult one, and I need and hope to pay more attention to it in the future.)

Baier then says that I seem to assume we don't empathize with past or future people. But in fact ECE (p.45) makes it very clear that one *can* empathize with future (groups of) individuals and merely insists that such empathizing comes less readily or strongly than in the case where danger or pleasure to a group or individual is present-tense. And there is absolutely no reason to think we can't empathize with past people (or the past sufferings or enjoyments of present people) as well.

Let me next turn to Annette Baier's discussion of my views on deontology and the law. She quite accurately notes that MS (and to a lesser extent ECE) tries to work out a conception of distributive (legal and social) justice in sentimentalist terms, but leaves issues of corrective justice fairly well untouched. In MS (p.136) I note this lacuna and say that

readers might be able to figure out for themselves how (my kind of) sentimentalism could be applied to issues of tort or criminal law/justice on the basis of what MS *does* say about distributive justice. But there is no substitute for my actually working things out.

However, Baier goes on to say that my account can't explain (or justify) deontology as it applies to individual action(s). According to Baier, I explain why certain actions of causing harm are morally worse, other things being equal, than actions of allowing harm, but say nothing to indicate why it is wrong to kill one innocent person in order to prevent two, say, from dying. But this is not correct. In ECE I argued that what shows a lack of fully empathic concern for others is wrong and said that a failure to save someone one sees to be in trouble goes more against the grain of empathy than a failure to save someone who one simply knows to be in trouble somewhere. It follows that (other things being equal) if one prefers to save someone whose difficulties one merely knows about rather than someone whose difficulties one perceives, one acts wrongly, *and I assumed that the reader of ECE would pick up on this implication*. By the same token, ECE says that killing goes more against the grain of empathy than allowing to die, and given the just-mentioned criterion of wrongness, it also follows that it is wrong to kill one person in order to save two. Again, I expected the reader to pick up on that implication, but because Baier (and perhaps other readers) didn't, it may help to have now made this point explicit. At any rate, ECE and MS (less fully) do offer an explanation of and justification for deontological claims about rightness and wrongness—though, certainly, not every interesting or complex issue that can arise in that area was discussed or touched upon.

Baier next addresses the differences between Hume's view of approval/disapproval and my own. As she notes, Hume allows for disapprobation or disapproval not only at coldness and cruelty, but at many other faults that aren't faults of the heart, and my talk of moral approval and disapproval is precisely limited to issues of the heart. But the fact is that I want to distinguish between moral approval and other forms of approval and, more significantly, between moral virtues and other sorts of desirable personal traits. Hume's theory of approval and disapproval relates these attitudes to the likely *effects* of various traits or actions, and since wit and humor can have (let us simplifyingly assume) the same sort of good effects as benevolence or compassion, there is no reason not to approve them

all from the impartial standpoint that Hume saw as foundational to moral thought. However, we ordinarily don't think of wit and humor as virtues, much less moral virtues, and we commonly distinguish between moral virtues like kindness and non-moral ones like industriousness and prudence (in the ordinary sense). Hume's general theoretical approach made him downplay such distinctions, but in criticizing Hume's approach to approval and disapproval, MS sought, among other things, to reestablish the distinction between the moral and the non-moral in a way that Hume wouldn't have been comfortable with. By focusing on cold and warm motivation as the basis for empathic disapproval and approval, moral approval is distinguished from the positive (and approving?) attitude we have to wit and prudence or cleverness, and moral judgments themselves are thus marked off from other forms of ethical evaluation and from non-ethical evaluations as well. This is reminiscent of Kant, though, of course, my arguments for the distinctiveness of the moral are made on a very different basis from anything to be found in Kant or Kantian thought in general. I think our ordinary thinking marks the moral realm as deeply different from the non-moral, and that fact supports the kind of approach taken in MS over Hume's less discriminating view. However, this difference also means that MS and ECE are much less comprehensive than Hume's account of morality and the virtues. I say things about moral virtue, but have nothing much to say about non-moral virtues or about "personality traits" like wit and a sunny disposition. That just shows you how much importance I really do place on the moral as such.

Baier claims that my semantics for moral terms is unpersuasive and that what I say about the wrongness of theft is also unpersuasive. But it would have been better if she had told us why she wasn't persuaded and had grappled with my actual arguments. And let me also mention one further misunderstanding. Baier says that my "version of morality is the Christian one," [p.36] rather than anything closely resembling Hume's approach. But Christian morality is impartialistic: we are to love everyone equally; and that not only goes against Hume's views, but in the deepest ways contradicts what a sentimentalist theory that relies on empathy wants to say.

Later in her discussion, Annette Baier says that empathy is neither necessary nor sufficient for benevolence. Now I made it clear in MS that one doesn't have to be actually



feeling empathic warmth in order to perform a benevolent action, but the psychologists' empathy-altruism hypothesis does hold, on the basis of a good deal of evidence, that genuine altruism depends on (the development of individual) empathy. Of course, Hume thought that ordinary benevolence can be very weak and fail to guarantee what morality requires in given circumstances, and this is a problem that contemporary sentimentalism needs to wrestle with. But wrestle with it I believe I did in MS (and to a lesser extent in ECE). Hume treats empathy/sympathy as coming naturally to us and regards benevolence as an instinct, so it is perhaps understandable that he said little or nothing about how empathy and benevolence can be taught or developed. The recent literature of psychology and philosophy has a lot, however, to say about this topic, and the relevance to moral education of books, films, or television and of parental or school moral training is discussed in that literature and in both ECE and MS. We have to work hard in order to (help people) overcome certain natural impediments to the helpfulness morality recommends, but that just shows you that a sentimentalist approach like my own very much needs an account of moral education and development. And that is why I spent so much time in ECE and, especially, in MS on those topics (though Baier never refers to those discussions).

Baier also criticizes my account of morality on the grounds that it has so little to say about when it is permissible to hurt or harm another person. In relationships, for example, some harmings or hurtings are morally acceptable, while others aren't, and I never went into this issue. That is correct, but it would not be a difficult thing to do. To wound or kill a threatening lover may be morally acceptable in sentimentalist terms, and to physically (or sexually) abuse a spouse or child will always be wrong. But does Baier really suppose that a theory like the one I present can't effectively handle issues about harming or causing pain in relationships? Every theory allows for a "normal science" phase in which many substantive and sometimes difficult problems are dealt with, but I judged and still judge that it was more important to deal with the basic theoretical/moral parameters before spending too much time on such specifics. I have tried to show that sentimentalism can handle the sorts of basic questions any philosophical theorist would want to see a normative-cum-metaethical theory deal with. But I certainly haven't dealt with every important normative or semantic issue.

Toward the end of her discussion Baier considers the fact that empathy can be socially manipulated and claims that (actual) empathy is a poor basis for a “reflective version of morals.” [p.39] Better moral theories, she says, appeal to something less fluid. But the moral criterion of fully empathic concern for others is obviously not the same thing as the empathic dispositions of any one person or of any given society, and the former may represent a fixed and permanent (valid) standard that given people or societies may in changeable ways only more or less approximate to.

Baier goes on to say: “[i]f extensiveness of empathy were proposed as a criterion of moral *progress*, I would have less quarrel with Slote.” [p.39] But I don’t see why she thinks that isn’t my view. Of course, empathy has to be learned or educated for, and it is clearly possible to feel empathy in some directions but not others (as Baier’s example of the Scythians attests). But let’s also be clear that it is very hard to correct deficiencies of empathy, especially in adults. ECE and MS argue that patriarchal societies show a lack of empathic respect for girls’ and women’s ideas and aspirations, and the ideal of a society in which everyone’s ideas and aspirations *are* empathically respected seems to me to count as a forward-looking view of what justice and morality demand. Our moral intuitions may largely depend on empathy, but many of them can be misguided because they result from one-sided or deficient empathic concerns—and as MS takes pains to argue, if people’s empathic concerns are limited, say, to their own group, that may very well be a reason to deny that they have fully developed moral concepts.

*Pace* Baier, therefore, I don’t think my moral and meta-ethical views particularly lend themselves to social conservatism. Nor does my claim, in MS, that moral claims can be objective(ly valid or true) entail that people are generally reasonable in their moral opinions. Baier seems to think I am committed to something like that conclusion, but the claim of objectivity (in a very standard sense) simply means that moral truth is independent of people’s beliefs about or attitudes toward morality. Objectivity doesn’t at all mean that people are going to easily cotton onto the objective truth about things, and the difficulty of getting people to acknowledge the wrongness of slavery or of certain sorts of treatment of women is strong evidence of the difficulty, in many kinds of cases, of coming to moral truth. If a sentimentalism based in empathy is correct, then there are social and

psychological impediments to the recognition of certain moral truths (like those we learn from feminism) that straight consequentialism and utilitarianism don't as readily reckon with, and although it would be nice to have a criterion of morality that everyone in every benighted time could apply as a corrective to that benightedness (and in a way this is what utilitarianism purports or appears to offer), it seems, unfortunately, more realistic to suppose that the ultimate criterion of morality will be something difficult to apply or recognize. It was difficult for slaveholders and patriarchs to recognize the wrongness of much of what they were doing, and it seems to me that a proper criterion of moral right and wrong should be able to explain or at least accommodate that fact—rather than assume or entail that we can all, with effort, figure out what it is right or wrong for us to do. So I think a criterion of morality that ties it to fully empathic concern for others points us (non-conservatively) toward a future of moral progress, but can also help explain why moral progress and moral problem-solving are often so difficult.

At the end of her review, Baier says that empathy and compassion need supplementation by other virtues in order to do “[their] own work properly.” [p.41] She adds: “If allied with stupidity, impatience, and foolhardiness, empathy will achieve little.” [p.41] And of course, as far as it goes, this is correct. But one would need to be a kind of consequentialist in order to turn these ideas against an ethics of empathic caring. First, most of us agree with Kant, rather than with typical consequentialists, that what one actually achieves shouldn't be considered the criterion of whether one has acted morally. So if a person really is unintelligent and has no way (yet) of knowing that, their empathic concern to help another may not achieve its purpose; but that fact, though extremely regrettable, presumably doesn't automatically show that they have acted wrongly, and the kind of sentimentalism I advocate can explain why in a way that consequentialism would have a difficult time doing.

Of course, if a person learns that they are lacking in intelligence and is really concerned to help others, they may learn their lesson from one or two failures and not bite off more than they can morally chew in the future. In fact, if they don't learn that lesson, their genuine concern to help others is criterially called into question, and something similar seems to be true about impatience and foolhardiness. If through impatience one

messes up an attempt, based on empathic concern, to help others, then, if one is a genuinely empathic and caring person, one will take that mistake (as we say) to heart, and, as MS points out with respect to the similar case of compassion fatigue, this is in fact  *criterial*  of what it is to be empathically concerned about others in a full-blown way. So according to an empathy-based sentimentalism, a fully empathic and concerned person will tend to be patient (and hard-working and not foolhardy) on behalf of others—and (to repeat) if, despite relevantly virtuous efforts, they fail to achieve their goals, an intuitively plausible morality will want to say, as I also want to say, that they have not acted wrongly. We may seek and (in some sense) morality may seek to achieve or produce certain good results, but I think Baier is mistaken to use the possibility of its achieving little as an argument against taking empathic concern for others as the criterion of what is  *morally*  right and wrong.

In any event, and given all the things I have said in this reply, Annette Baier might want to think again about the merits and prospects of the general sentimentalist project undertaken in ECE and MS.

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