



Family in Sophie de Grouchy (1764–1822)

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De Grouchy provides a moral theory based on sympathy. In order to explain the nature of this disposition de Grouchy begins by providing an account of the origin of and the context in which sympathy develops. Sympathy unfolds as a disposition that develops in the context of human relations via sensations of pleasure and pain felt at the hands of our care givers. We humans depend on many others for our needs and survival and this dependency de Grouchy writes 'begins in the crib'. A child feels the first pleasurable sensations of affection at the hands of the wet-nurse and she is the person the child initially longs for. De Grouchy argues that we are emotionally pre-deposed to care more for those who cared for us and to whom we owe our well being and happiness. This section of de Grouchy's *Letters* was written to fill an omission in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* for neglecting to explain the causes of sympathy, and in this regard it is an early text in a critique of liberal individualism. Sympathy begins with dependency; it continues to serve as the disposition that binds people together; it becomes the basis for moral relations, and it is a necessary condition for healthy social and political relations as well.

Primary Sources:

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