



## *Pain in Sophie de Grouchy (1764-1822)*

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The phenomenon of pain forms the basis and heart of Sophie de Grouchy's account of sympathy. She begins by explaining the causes of sympathy in order to show that sympathy is a natural disposition and an essential part of our humanity. Sympathy originates in sensations of pleasure and pain, particularly in the experience of physical pain. Any physical pain, she explains, produces a compound sensation consisting of a specific pain followed by general impression of pain that can linger beyond the original injury. That general impression of pain can be triggered by the memory or sight of pain, which then results in experiencing a painful memory or feeling sympathy respectively. Pain thus has a "moral presence" because we can feel pain upon seeing another person suffer. Thus de Grouchy concludes that the essence of sympathy is the disposition we have "to feel as others do".

Further, repeated experiences of pain produce an "abstract idea of pain", which is a familiarity with pain that enables us to sympathize with suffering we haven't endured ourselves. For de Grouchy we are capable of sympathizing with strangers and even with a distant group of people and the suffering they endure. The desire to avoid pain is also an essential part of our morality and our conscience. Having done wrong also produces a general and abstract sentiment which is essentially a feeling of regret and remorse, and these feelings also create a fear of doing wrong. Sympathy begins with sentiency and sensitivity to pain and suffering and continues with reflection which extends the ideas given by the sentiments. For de Grouchy sympathy is an essential disposition for moral, social and political life without which self-interest, injustice and oppression can reign. "It is for this reason that pain and the adversity are such effective schools for making men more compassionate and more human".

### **Primary Sources:**

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