Basis of Morality in Sophie de Grouchy (1764–1822)

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Sophie de Grouchy followed Adam Smith, whose *Theory of Moral Sentiments* she translated in 1798, in arguing that morality developed from a basic human faculty for sympathy. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith argues that morality arises out of our reactive attitudes and sympathy, but that moral principles can only be developed through reason to become a system of moral rules, so that neither reason nor sentiment by themselves can give us morality.

She argues that sympathy starts at a purely physiological level but grows with memory reason and the imagination to become both more abstract and universal. An infant first feels sympathy for her wet-nurse being in physical pain (as this may affect her feeding) but later learns to recognize moral (psychological) as well as physical pain, and to feel sympathy for people not directly connected to her. This process relies not only on the natural development of reason and the emotions, but on an educational process which emphasizes both the development of abstract thinking and exposure to others' suffering.

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