



## *Teleological Ethics* in Sophie de Grouchy (1764–1822)

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In *Letter on Sympathy* V, entitled “On the origins of moral ideas” Grouchy offers an analysis of the concepts of virtue and moral goodness based on her discussion of Adam Smith in the previous Letters. In this analysis she moves between virtue ethical and consequentialist explanations of moral concepts. On the one hand, everything must stem from the character, which has to be educated in order to develop the propensity to feel the right sort of sympathy in the right circumstances—this is clearly Aristotelian in spirit. On the other, she claims that reason approves of, or condemns acts depending on whether they are beneficial to humanity or not, which feels more utilitarian. We might reflect here that at the end of the 18th century, although consequentialism was very new and no doubt felt revolutionary, it was not yet a stance that positioned itself against more Aristotelian perspectives.

Whether her approach is predominantly Aristotelian or Utilitarian, character development plays a large role in her moral theory. It is best seen in her account of moral education: in order to develop a strong sympathy, one must become accustomed to recognizing pain in others. Politically, Grouchy argues that a dominated people (i.e. a people living under a monarchy) are not only morally inferior to the people of a republic, but also less emotionally mature (Bergès 2015b, 6).

### **Primary Sources:**

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