



PROJECT MUSE®

Our Better Angels: Empathy, Sympathetic Reason, and Pragmatic Moral Progress

Kory Sorrell

The Pluralist, Volume 9, Number 1, Spring 2014, pp. 66-86 (Article)

Published by University of Illinois Press



➔ For additional information about this article
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/plu/summary/v009/9.1.sorrell.html>

Our Better Angels: Empathy, Sympathetic Reason, and Pragmatic Moral Progress

KORY SORRELL

Bilkent University

Introduction

Empathy is the ability to infer and share the feelings, intentions, and goals of other persons.¹ It provides the basis for our extraordinary capacity to help others, including strangers we may never meet, without interest in personal benefit. Its extent has been controversial, but recent studies in neuroscience, empirical psychology, and primatology support a highly empathic understanding of human nature. This view overturns the so-called “Darwinian” paradigm prevalent both in popular imagination and academic disciplines.² The “Darwinian” account—in quotes because distant from Darwin’s own express views³—holds that “man is a wolf to man” (*homo homini lupus*); that individuals are self-maximizing and manipulative, even when seemingly kind to others (a common joke among psychologists: “scratch an ‘altruist’ and watch a ‘hypocrite’ bleed”); and that “Mother Nature” rewards the strong and discards the weak (“the devil take the hindmost”).⁴ As Richard A. Posner writes, “Darwin’s picture of nature is bleak; it is dog eat dog in virtually a literal sense; the adaptionist process that produced us is genocidal.”⁵

But recent studies support a different picture, a kinder one, in which persons are naturally attuned to one another, cannot help feeling what others feel, and spontaneously reach out to others in need. In *The Age of Empathy*, Frans de Waal calls for “a complete overhaul of assumptions about human nature.”⁶ The empathic paradigm is a “radical new view,” writes Jeremy Rifkin in *The Empathic Civilization*, “with radical implications for the way we understand and organize our economic, social and environmental relations in the centuries to come.”⁷ Both Rifkin (an economic and social theorist) and de Waal (a primatologist) look to empathy as an important source of moral progress. Rifkin argues that human empathy emerged over time, in conjunction with

cultural developments (e.g., communications technology), and harbors vast potential. He defines “civilization” as “the detribalization of blood ties and the resocialization of distinct individuals based on associational ties,” and empathy is the psychological mechanism that makes this possible.⁸ Its growth on a global scale helps us set aside local ties and provincial loyalties, which often lead to violence and cruelty, in favor of wider association and shared consciousness of common fate.⁹

De Waal is similarly concerned. He claims that “[t]he greatest problem today, with so many different groups rubbing shoulders on a crowded planet, is excessive loyalty to one’s own nation, group, or religion.”¹⁰ Fully aware of the extraordinary violence of which humans (and other primates) are capable, he suggests that even a modest increase in empathy may help us avoid brutal acts against one another. Empathy is part of human nature, de Waal reminds us. Its basic and pervasive forms are far less complex than many think, and it provides a reservoir from which we may draw to cope with a conflicted social world.¹¹ “If I were God,” de Waal writes, “I’d work on the reach of empathy.”¹²

Maia Szalavitz (science journalist) and Bruce Perry (child psychiatrist) concur with de Waal and Rifkin, claiming we need “an empathy epidemic.”¹³ They insist “[e]mpathy underlies virtually everything that makes society work—like trust, altruism, collaboration, love, charity. Failure to empathize is a key part of most social problems—crime, violence, war, racism, child abuse and inequity, to name just a few.”¹⁴ They believe that empathy, or the lack thereof, characterizes entire cultures and that we can deliberately cultivate this capacity.¹⁵ For support, they point to the “Roots of Empathy” school program, established by Mary Gordon, for solid evidence that we can enhance empathy, and they argue that developing this one capacity may foster enormous social change.¹⁶

Others, such as Steven Pinker and Paul Bloom (both psychologists), disagree. Pinker writes brilliantly on the historical decline of violence in *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, but considers empathy too selective and arbitrary to be of much use. Studies show that empathy is mercurial: people respond differently depending on mood, recent experience, and whether they recognize the other person as familiar or foreign.¹⁷ Empathy can also conflict with other important social values, such as fairness, prompting us to dismiss the legitimate claims of strangers in favor of those eliciting concern.¹⁸ Pinker concludes that “[t]he problem with building a better world through empathy, in the sense of contagion, mimicry, vicarious emotion, or mirror neurons, is that it cannot be counted on to trigger the kind of empathy we want, namely sympathetic concern for others’ well-being.”¹⁹ Hoping to extend empathy

to complete strangers is “utopian in the worst 20th century sense,” Pinker writes, “requiring an unattainable and dubiously desirable quashing of human nature.”²⁰ He suggests we instead rely on reason to move *beyond* empathy: “The ultimate goal should be policies and norms that become second nature and render empathy unnecessary.”²¹

Bloom similarly emphasizes limits. Specific, identifiable suffering triggers spontaneous empathic response (that may or may not be helpful), but suffering of anonymous groups often escapes notice.²² The tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut (14 Dec. 2012), in which twenty school children were murdered, illustrates his point. People empathized deeply with victims, sending gifts that townspeople could not use (literally a warehouse full of toys), despite pleas that charity be sent somewhere else. Meanwhile other children, some 20 million, nightly go to bed hungry without eliciting public concern.²³ Because more attuned to individual cases, empathy appears unsuited for dealing with large social problems, and Bloom sides with Pinker. He writes that

[i]f a planet of billions is to survive, however, we'll need to take into consideration the welfare of people not yet harmed—and, even more, of people not yet born. They have no names, faces, or stories to grip our conscience or stir our fellow feeling. Their prospects call, rather, for deliberation and calculation. . . . [E]mpathy will have to yield to reason if humanity is to have a future.²⁴

Bloom acknowledges that human beings are profoundly empathic, but like Pinker does not trust it, and he urges us to set it aside in favor of rationality.

This is a genuine debate, and there may be much at stake: given an empathic understanding of human nature, how can we secure moral progress and moderate social conflict? This essay addresses the issue from a Pragmatic perspective. The central argument is that James and Dewey provide an alternative approach, one that avoids the above dilemma but addresses the concerns of each side. The Pragmatists *integrate* empathy and rationality in a distinct concept and practice of “sympathetic reason,” one that (with de Waal and others) draws on empathy as a valuable resource. The Pragmatists never bought into the so-called “Darwinian” view of human nature, and their account is compatible with—indeed, thoroughly anticipates—the new empathic paradigm. But the Pragmatists also recognized the limits of empathy and sought to render it more intelligent in practice (thus minimizing the wayward tendencies that concern Pinker and Bloom).

To develop this argument, section 1 briefly explores recent empirical studies in neuroscience, in particular the discovery of mirror mechanisms, which

provide the physiological basis of empathy. It also offers a brief taxonomy of different forms of empathy to show how it works and pervades much of our experience. The point is that the new empathic paradigm (which Pragmatists share) is grounded solidly in human biology, and empathy may prove a valuable source of moral progress. Nevertheless, Bloom and Pinker are right to be concerned. There are situations in which empathy goes awry, and relying on empathy alone would be naïve. But this does not mean that empathy should be left behind. It requires guidance, and section 2 turns to the work of James and Dewey to show how that is possible. Rather than choosing *between* empathy and reason, the Pragmatists combine them in practice, methodically, and this section shows how that works in a general way. Section 3 then focuses on James's specific diagnosis of why we often fail to empathize with other ways of life (or other groups, as de Waal and Rifkin would have it) and his response. James advocates a specific but broad social reform, urging us to cultivate our sense of the inherent worth of others' lives, of their *dignity*, and to appreciate it even (or especially) when apt to be dismissive. This not only allows us to share and vicariously participate in the lives of others (a treasured good in its own right), but also encourages us to be responsive to others especially in times of need. This effort extends not only to individuals we actually encounter, but also their associated groups, other members of which we may never come across.

I. Empirical Foundations and Forms of Empathy

Recent discoveries in neuroscience demonstrate that human beings are not only capable of empathy, but that empathic awareness and basic understanding of others is automatic and pervasive. The story, which is truly dramatic, begins in the 1990s when Giacomo Rizzolatti and his team studied neural activity and planning movements in macaque monkeys. Their research indicated that neurons in the F5 region of the prefrontal cortex activate prior to a monkey's reaching out to grasp an object (a peanut). This was expected: it is cognitive preparation for subsequent movement. But the team was shocked when a subset of F5 neurons fired when a monkey observed *another* monkey reach for an object, even though the observer made no subsequent movement. The team identified this as a "mirror mechanism," a discharge whose purpose is unrelated to planning.²⁵ Instead, "discharge generates an internal representation of the movement" with complementary functions, such as motor learning and understanding of observed action.²⁶ "Understanding" here means "the capacity to recognize that an individual is performing an

action, to differentiate this action from others analogous to it, and to use this information in order to act appropriately.”²⁷ These monkeys, it turns out, operate with a rudimentary “theory of mind”: they attribute interiority to others and purpose to observed action.

Subsequent studies indicate that humans also possess a number of mirror mechanisms. These are involved not only in successful imitation and understanding, but also in emotional experiences, such as disgust, and in witnessing others’ pain.²⁸ Discovery of mirror systems indicates that human beings are biologically “wired for empathy.”²⁹ According to Daniel Siegel, these systems are fundamentally involved in human empathy and emotional resonance, and they allow us (as Marco Iacoboni emphasizes) to have *automatic* empathy: “Mirror neurons allow us to grasp the minds of others not through conceptual reasoning but through direct simulation. By feeling, not by thinking.”³⁰ They also support higher forms of empathic experience. As Murray Smith writes, “[m]imicry of basic actions and emotions may *scaffold* the imagination, including the empathic imagination, of more elaborate, finely-specified states of mind.”³¹ “Preverbal and automatic” basic forms of empathy “are not replaced by the advance modes but continue to operate along with them.”³²

Empirical studies show that empathic experience is truly pervasive, taking not only different forms, but forms with variations, sometimes appearing alone or in combination with others.³³ A fairly simple form, one especially attractive to advocates of empathy as a source of moral progress, is *contagion*. This is the rapid spread of feeling from one person to another and fully captures the mirror dynamic.³⁴ People literally share an emotion, and this may take a group form, as with spectators at a sporting event or participants in a protest. Contagion is the swift expression of a biological mechanism that allows us to intuitively grasp the minds, and feel the feelings, of other persons, commonly accomplished through physical and emotional mimicry in which there is a strong physiological component.³⁵ This is automatic, and it begins very early. As Marc Hauser writes, “when the child unconsciously mimics another’s facial expression of sadness or delight, she automatically creates a coupling between her expressions and her emotions.”³⁶ Consequently, “when young children see others experiencing a particular emotion, they will simultaneously feel something similar. Empathy moves as a form of contagion, like a game of emotional tag.”³⁷ This entanglement of bodily expression and emotion means that we do not need to deliberately infer, or puzzle out, what others feel “inside.” We directly experience their feelings’ vivid physical expression. The coupling of emotion and expression provides a medium

through which individuals and whole groups continuously and directly affect one another, without ever “thinking” about it. This medium accompanies us always—we are doing it much of the time, not just once in a while—and it renders other, higher forms of empathic engagement possible.

One such higher form is *empathic projection*. Here one imaginatively puts oneself in the shoes of another person and explores how it feels to experience that person’s world.³⁸ It essentially asks: “How would you feel if you were the one [abused, tortured, ignored, etc.]?” and the experience may profoundly affect the imagining participant.³⁹ From a moral point of view, this may also be quite valuable. As Amy Coplan writes, “[e]xperiencing the other as a version of ourselves in many situations is a good thing, and it’s usually far better than experiencing the other in purely instrumental terms.”⁴⁰ But we must be careful. Projection “makes us more likely to become emotionally over-aroused and, consequently, focused solely on our own experience” rather than on the experience of someone else.⁴¹ It may also lead to mistaken attribution, leading us to presume others feel as we do when they may in fact feel very differently.⁴²

Beyond projection lies a significantly more deliberate and demanding form, *perspective-taking*. This is the ability to imagine what the world looks like according to someone else, to “see what they see,” given their situated-ness in the world.⁴³ Perspective-taking is balanced toward higher, slower cognitive function instead of lower, faster automatic response in order to capture a more accurate grasp of the other’s point of view.⁴⁴ The experience is revelatory but is likely to be an affectively diminished one.⁴⁵ One may understand (and feel), for example, something of the humiliation, pain, and outrage a person subjected to racial prejudice feels, but not feel it with the same hot intensity as the other.

It is tempting to think we can at best toggle between projection and perspective-taking, but we sometimes combine features of both. The more abstract perspective of the other is fused with the more immediate emotional perspective of the first person, encouraging us to take the view of the other with the same (or similar) emotional conviction (perhaps recruiting the powerful mechanism of contagion) with which we experience our own perspective. The values, needs, and preferences of others may become just as salient (and in some cases, even more so) as our own, and indeed, they may *become* ours as we share experience with them in an ongoing way.⁴⁶

This process of identification also paves the road for more inclusive identification. We comprehend not only the situation of individuals, but that of their associated groups.⁴⁷ Having genuinely empathized with a victim of some

form of violence, we may generalize—indeed we are *moved* to generalize—from the individual to others similarly situated. As Hoffman writes, “[o]ne not only feels compelled to help the group in the present but becomes committed to act on their behalf beyond the situation and often over an extended period of time and at great personal cost.”⁴⁸ This need to help the individual, and in some cases entire groups, is *empathic concern*. The intense emotion diminishes over time, and may all but disappear or only occasionally return, but the commitment to help endures. Moreover, this sort of empathic response does not, as Pinker and Bloom suggest, require us to treat billions of strangers as family. Rather, personal experience with specific individuals establishes a bridge to concern for whole groups—the members of which are largely unknown, merely imagined, and may well yet be unborn—that commit us to not only reach out spontaneously, but commit to long-term courses of social conduct.⁴⁹

Finally, empathic perspective-taking sometimes opens the door to what Stephen Darwall refers to as a sense of “being with” another person, that is, being *together*.⁵⁰ Whereas empathic concern generally has to do with relative strangers, this is constitutive of intimacy associated with loved ones and close friends (whom we may come to think of as family). This is *mutual empathy*, an experience that Ingvar Johansson describes as “intentional mirror infinity,” where, as Kay Mathiesen writes, “we are not just perceiving things from our own perspective, but are also aware of the other’s perspective and experiences at the same time.”⁵¹ As Darwall describes it, “friends and lovers are usually less concerned with mutual accountability than they are with responding to one another’s needs, feelings, and concerns, whether these are justifiable or not.”⁵² It is the sense in which two people genuinely share experience in an ongoing way; it is both present and prospective; and it is animated by warmth of interior understanding for and from another person.⁵³ It is comparatively rare, hard to come by as James points out, but also not the form on which de Waal and Rifkin rely for their view. Mutual empathy is *of course* selective and must remain so. But it may be expanded somewhat (as James will suggest below) and other forms (projection, perspective-taking, empathic concern) may be cultivated more broadly. To see how, we turn to the Pragmatists.

2. Sympathetic Reason

James and Dewey do not use the term “empathy,” offering instead a varied and nuanced understanding of “sympathy.” James’s early treatment is brief, but suggestive, and Dewey carries it further. In *The Principles of Psychology*, James first dismisses the argument that sympathy is not native to human

nature. His contemporaries argued that sympathy originates in the results of rapid calculations of outcomes, and that these acts had become sufficiently habitual to be indistinguishable from instinct. This is an example of the so-called “Darwinian” view of human nature—seemingly selfless (or altruistic) acts are in fact selfish—but James would have none of it:

Some forms of sympathy, that of mother with child, for example, are surely primitive, and not intelligent forecasts of board and lodging and other support to be reaped in old age. Danger to the child blindly and instantaneously stimulates the mother to actions of alarm or defence. Menace or harm to the adult beloved or friend excites us in a corresponding way, often against all the dictates of prudence.⁵⁴

James concludes that sympathy is instinctive,⁵⁵ is rooted in human biology, and proposes that it may be due to selection of random variation.⁵⁶

But James is also clearly aware of its limits. In everyday life, sympathy must compete with other instincts, and sympathy is “peculiarly liable to inhibition.”⁵⁷ Anticipating Pinker’s observations, he writes that fear or disgust may check the impulse toward sympathetic aid, as when the priest and the Levite notoriously refused to assist the traveler in the story of The Good Samaritan. James suggests the Samaritan admirably overcame other impulses, permitting sympathy to express itself. The story also shows that the instinct may be modified—essentially “tuned up” or “dialed down.” James writes: “[H]abits, reasoned reflections, and calculations may either check or reinforce one’s sympathy; as may also the instincts of love or hate, if these exist, for the suffering individual.”⁵⁸

Given a mixed endowment of native instinct and development, James (like Pinker and Bloom) fully understood that sympathy alone is sometimes not enough. *Reflection*—as pause, as a calling up of other instincts, emotions, and specific memories of past occasions—is also needed:

Man has a far greater variety of *impulses* than any lower animal; and any one of these impulses, taken in itself, is as “blind” as the lowest instinct can be; but, owing to man’s memory, power of reflection, and power of inference, they come each one to be felt by him, after he has once yielded to them and experienced their results, in connection with a *foresight* of those results.⁵⁹

James does not simply set aside instinct in favor of reason. “Reason,” James argues, “can inhibit no impulses; the only thing that can neutralize an impulse is an impulse the other way.”⁶⁰ The role of reason is to shape native propensity. It makes inferences regarding relations, calls up memory, and sets

imagination loose—in this case, to educate sympathy—so that various impulses may come into play, conflict, modify one another, and ultimately result in desirable action. Sympathy gains foresight in light of other considerations, and intelligent conduct, according to James’s model, is action occurring after this kind of inclusive deliberation has a chance to occur.⁶¹

Dewey’s view of sympathy tracks and extends James’s account. Like James, Dewey recognizes sympathy as a “genuine natural instinct” (he similarly did not buy into the “Darwinism” of his day). His early writings also anticipate current views of empathy in which complex forms emerge from more rudimentary ones: “Sympathy has its origin in what is termed resonance or contagion of feeling. There is a psychical atmosphere as well as a physical, and one living in this atmosphere absorbs and reflects it. Laughter and crying are both ‘catching.’ We unconsciously reproduce the feelings of those about us; we take on their mood unaware.”⁶² But this is only the “basis” of sympathy: “For sympathy, we must not only have this feeling ourselves, but we must recognize, in addition, that it is the experience of someone else”; it “involves distinction as well as identification”; and, fully anticipating both Hoffman and Darwall, “[w]e must not only take their life into ours, but we must put ours into them. Sympathy, as active interest, thus becomes love and a spring to action.”⁶³ But for Dewey, sympathetic experience is something vitally more; it is the basis of full self-realization in company with others:

[T]he nature of sympathy is such that growth in individuality is a necessary accompaniment of growth of universality of feeling. Sympathy identifies others with one’s self, and at the same time distinguishes them from one’s self. It enables us to realize our true nature, which is universal personality, by widening our life till it becomes as comprehensive as humanity, and at the same time deepens our own distinct individuality. Such a sympathy can, of course, recognize no distinction of social rank, wealth, or learning, or anything that tends to cut off one person from another.⁶⁴

Dewey’s claim to “universal personality” may seem ambitious, but modern psychology and neuroscience support it. As discussed in section 1, empathic perspective-taking gives rise to genuinely shared experience in which the self retains its individuality while taking on the perspective and point of view not only of specific others, but of the groups to which they belong. This capacity is rooted in mirror mechanisms that support automatic processes facilitating more basic forms of empathy, such as contagion. These in turn are recruited by higher-order cognitive abilities to take the perspective of others and their

associated groups. Thus truly, as Dewey claims, “[s]ympathy widens our interest in consequences and leads us to take into account such results as affect the welfare of others; it aids us to count and weigh these consequences as counting for as much as those which touch our own honor, purse, or power.”⁶⁵ Moreover, Dewey is right to suggest that our sympathy may be “as comprehensive as all humanity.” Pinker and Bloom deride the idea that we may empathize with large numbers of strangers, persons we have never met and may even be unborn, but we often *do* empathize with large groups of strangers, and many people commit careers and/or other large portions of their lives to helping them.

The real problem, Dewey observes, is that *spontaneous* expression of sympathy tends to be partial. Anticipating the concerns of Pinker and Bloom, he writes that “[i]t rarely extends beyond those near to us, members of our own family and our friends. It rarely operates with reference to those out of sight or to strangers, certainly not to enemies”; it tends to be superficial, taken in by conspicuous cases of immediate concern; and worse still, acts that have become habitual and practices that form part of everyday experience are likely to be ignored entirely.⁶⁶ Dewey (like James) therefore argues that sympathy must be balanced by other dispositions in order to *rationalize* sympathy. “More ‘passions,’ not fewer, is the answer.”⁶⁷

To check the influence of hate there must be sympathy, while to rationalize sympathy there are needed emotions of curiosity, caution, respect for the freedom of others—dispositions which evoke objects which balance those called up by sympathy, and prevent its degeneration into maudlin sentiment and meddling interference.⁶⁸

The idea of “reason” here, as with James, is not a separate faculty in contrast to passion, but rather “the happy cooperation of a multitude of dispositions, such as sympathy, curiosity, exploration, experimentation, frankness, pursuit—to follow things through—circumspection, to look about at the context, etc., etc.”⁶⁹ Reason is itself a resulting disposition, or attunement, that incorporates all of these tendencies, each balancing, widening, and circumscribing one another in various ways, depending on the circumstances. As sympathy is “rationalized” (or rendered more reasonable) by other dispositions, dispositions traditionally associated with reason (such as impartiality and calculation) are in turn balanced by sympathy, giving us *sympathetic reason*. In this combination, sympathy is harnessed (or directed), but the motive force, the passions that move us (empathic concern), remain as drivers of individual and collective conduct.

Sympathetic reason is expressed through ongoing adjustment, modifications that may be directed very specifically at the limits of spontaneous sympathy identified above. For example, we might become aware of the fact that certain extraneous circumstances—such as being in a hurry or a bad mood—affect our tendency to help others, and find this troubling. It vexes us precisely because we are able to engage in empathic projection and perspective-taking, which Dewey aptly calls “dramatic rehearsal.”⁷⁰ This involves exploring the consequences of various acts, both for self and others—an extraordinary exercise in empathic imagination:

We foreknow how others will act, and the foreknowledge is the beginning of judgment passed on action. We know *with* them; there is conscience. An assembly is formed within our breast which discusses and appraises proposed and performed acts. The community without becomes a forum and tribunal within, a judgment-seat of charges, assessments and exculpations. *Our thoughts of our own actions are saturated with the ideas that others entertain about them*, ideas which have been expressed not only in explicit instruction but still more effectively in reaction to our acts.⁷¹

“Conscience” is possible because we know so much about the feeling, thoughts, intentions, and goals of other persons. What the recent empirical work on empathy contributes to the Pragmatic account is empirical support for how this is truly possible, that is, how we *really are able* not only to infer the feelings, thoughts, and intentions of others from our and their point of view, but also value their perspective as much as (or more than) our own. When this happens, we deliberate not only for ourselves, but truly on behalf of others as well and in their best interest (not just covertly our own).⁷²

Dramatic rehearsal issues in judgments, for example, the need to be more responsive to those in need despite being in a hurry. We may then identify and follow a rule, like “*always* stop when someone asks for help,” at least for a time, to lend strength to empathic concern in these contexts, thus re-balancing our set of habits and associated impulses by “tuning up” empathic response (making it more automatic) in a specific context. Sympathetic *reason*, of course, may also lead us to moderate an empathic impulse, such as when we are in a hospital and interests of fairness dictate waiting our turn even when very concerned about the health of a loved one. It may similarly lead us to take a rather critical view of ourselves when reflecting on how often we fail to empathize with less obvious, but no less worthy, cases of misfortune (e.g., Bloom’s example of malnourished children). So rather than merely reacting to situations spontaneously when they happen to occur, we may deliberately

seek them out and further educate ourselves about how best to respond to such crises.⁷³ One of the valuable lessons of the Sandy Hook Elementary School incident may be developing better mechanisms for actually helping victims and seeing that outpourings of donations are not wasted should such tragedy strike again.⁷⁴

What is distinctive about the Pragmatic method is that it sets aside the usual (and rather arbitrary) distinction between reason and emotion and instead *harmonizes* them in deliberate practice, or rather sees rationality as an ongoing and more or less intelligent reshaping of habitual expression of instinct, through cultivation of a greater variety of impulse and habit in the actual situations we experience.⁷⁵ *Of course*, empathic response may go awry in practice, but these experiences, taken as pedagogical, call attention to problems that may be addressed in time through deliberate and creative response. The solution, from a Pragmatic perspective, is deliberate reform, not arbitrary dismissal of our native propensity to empathize with others. Moreover, on this model there is no need to think of persons as strictly selfish or altruistic. People may help without interest in reward (genuine altruism), but this does not mean that helping is not rewarding (or stranger still, shouldn't be rewarding). Once we see our way past the *faux* "Darwinian" selfish paradigm, we can dispense with the idea that actions have to be one or the other; they can be both, or more accurately, they can be mutually beneficial, mutually rewarding—shared experiences that help make life more meaningful in association with others.

3. Blindness, Recognition, and Dignity

In addition to this Pragmatic approach, or general method, James also tenders specific advice for cultivating empathic experience more broadly. In *On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings*, James extols our ability to experience the feelings, values, and ideals of others, but emphasizes how often we fail to do so.⁷⁶ Sympathy is rare not because we are intrinsically selfish or indifferent to others (we aren't and now recognize this as more faux "Darwinism"), but because we are practical creatures subject to such pressing demands that we are apt to dismiss others out of hand or judge them precipitously.⁷⁷ To redress this blindness, which James calls "the trait in human character most likely to make the angels weep," he proposes a principle of conduct: "It absolutely forbids us to be forward in pronouncing on the meaninglessness of forms of existence other than our own; and it commands us to tolerate, respect, and indulge those whom we see harmlessly interested and happy in their own

ways, however unintelligible these may be to us.”⁷⁸ Consistent with his discussion of impulse, James recommends we cultivate an attitude—a passion really—to esteem, indulge, and respect others. This tendency extends not only to other individuals, but also to the groups of which they are members, and the way of life they share. We do this not by separating emotion from reason, but by introducing and harmonizing impulses so as to make them more reasonable, more intelligent in practice, more likely to result in morally desirable conduct. Rather than setting it aside (Bloom), or moving beyond it (Pinker), we put empathy to work and enjoy the fruits of its labors.

James then supports this principle by explaining more precisely what is *worthy* of our admiration, tolerance, and respect in others. Invoking his experience in a planned community near Chautauqua Lake, James observes that human struggle is everywhere; if we pay attention, it is profoundly evident in the lives of everyone around us pursuing, fighting for, and suffering to achieve various ideals for themselves and loved ones. James describes this recognition as “lives leveled up as well as leveled down”—leveled down with respect to outward difference and show (social class, etc.), but raised to equally high status in having rich inner meaning and personal significance.⁷⁹ What is worthy, James poignantly concludes, “is the common fact that here we are, a countless multitude of vessels of life, each of us pent in to peculiar difficulties, with which we must severally struggle by using whatever of fortitude and goodness we can summon up.”⁸⁰

Although James does not invoke the term, he offers nothing less than a basis for human *dignity*, for what it is about every individual human life that warrants respect and tolerance, even where those lives are opaque or provoke outsiders’ condemnation. To expose this “common fact,” James lingers over the lives of the poor, of those for whom many of us lack understanding, sympathy, and (perhaps especially) admiration. James remarks that we raise monuments to generals but not ordinary workers because we suppose the former have ideals, but assume the latter have none.⁸¹ Yet “ideals are relative to the lives that entertain them. To keep out of the gutter is for us here no part of consciousness at all, yet for many of our brethren it is the most legitimately engrossing of ideals.”⁸² The point is not which ideals one has, but that one existentially struggles, endures, and suffers in realizing them. Every person is capable of this, which calls for a cautious and tolerant attitude. Where manifest, it invites admiration and further demands our respect, or even “grudging recognition” when we don’t identify with them (or their pursuits).⁸³

Highlighting the dignity of others and cultivating attendance to it attunes us (even predisposes us) toward features of others that trigger empathic

awareness, facilitates perspective-taking and, in some cases, elicits empathic concern and mutual empathy. Emphasizing common dignity diminishes awareness of individual and group boundaries and discourages precipitous judgment and indifference, helping us to set aside the tribal prejudices that worry both Rifkin and de Waal (among others). As Jonathan Haidt observes, “[y]ou can make people care less about race by drowning race differences in a sea of similarities, shared goals, and mutual interdependencies.”⁸⁴ Attuning ourselves to human dignity invites attention to what humans share, opens space for discussion and development of common goals, and allows the reality of obscured interdependence to emerge.

A key to this Pragmatist approach is avoiding the idea that personal attachment to groups is necessarily harmful. It isn't. As Haidt suggests, our capacity to participate in groups “is one of the magical ingredients that made it possible for civilizations to burst forth, cover the Earth, and live more peacefully in just a few thousand years.”⁸⁵ Potential problems arise when a group (or small number of groups) accrue such control that they are capable of imposing themselves on their members and outsiders.⁸⁶ The answer, to paraphrase Dewey on impulse, is *more groups not fewer*, more opportunities to share experiences with those differently situated in a variety of different ways of living. Multiple-membership curtails the influence of any one group and expands horizons. It allows us to enjoy the deeply rewarding benefits of membership (of *belonging*) without being held captive or growing excessively blind by virtue of exclusive participation. It is worth recalling that James, in his discussion of the self in *Principles*, defines the self in part as committed to multiple social groups, each of which reveal a part of one's character, and each of which delimits the others.⁸⁷ And Dewey similarly recognized that individuals are always members of many groups, and that participation (where not exclusive) may contribute to the expression and integration of the self.⁸⁸

Deliberately cultivated along these lines, empathic experience is not a matter of sacrifice, altruism, balancing, or trade-offs, but a *virtuous spiral* in which personal experience expands through appreciative experience of others, and vice versa, in an ongoing manner.⁸⁹ This is a source of distinctly human enjoyment, particularly when it reaches the heights of mutual empathy. It also renders us more receptive to others, especially when vulnerable, injured, or otherwise in need. This is the distinctive, extraordinary, and often poignant experience of someone (or a group) directly facing us and asking for *help*. In these situations our attitudes may be dramatically changed by empathic concern, and we may be jolted into action, doing anything we can for those calling out to us. In these experiences, where we genuinely help others, both

they and we are truly better off. We also benefit because caring is intrinsically rewarding,⁹⁰ and this is a reciprocal condition, for each of us, at some time, and perhaps many times, deeply crave and need understanding and help from others. As James writes, “[w]here would any of *us* be, were there no one willing to know us as we really are or ready to repay us for *our* insight by making recognizant return? We ought, all of us, to realize each other in this intense, pathetic, and important way.”⁹¹ The struggle for a meaningful and happy human life, James reminds us, involves above all a need for others—a lifelong need to share, as well as for care and occasional help.

4. Conclusion

This essay explored recent studies in neuroscience, empirical psychology, and primatology that support an empathic understanding of human nature, one that Pragmatists pioneered but had been displaced by a selfish paradigm—faux Darwinism. A Pragmatic approach to empathy benefits considerably from these recent studies, but also shows how we may put empathy to better use, enjoy its benefits, and curb its excesses. It shows that the way forward lies not in choosing between empathy and reason for moral progress, but in combining them and cultivating specific forms of empathic experience. This is practical advice that hopefully moves us a bit closer to that “Age of Empathy” envisioned by Jeremy Rifkin—a world in which “our better angels” are deliberately brought forth.

NOTES

1. Stueber 27; Darwall 8. This is a preliminary definition. See endnote 33 for more detail.

2. As Jonathan Haidt observes, the idea of *homo economicus* became widespread across academic disciplines, particularly in the 1970s. This is a view in which man is intrinsically selfish, and “[a]ll acts of apparent altruism, cooperation, and even simple fairness had to be explained, ultimately, as covert forms of self-interest.” Haidt 229.

3. Darwin never supported these ideas and wrote of the “disinterested love for all living creatures” as “the most noble attribute of man.” *Descent* 330.

4. de Waal 4, 43; Rifkin 48. This view has long been a staple of American business culture. Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller embraced competition as a law of nature, and more recently, Jeffrey Skilling (of Enron fame) was enamored with Dawkin’s “selfish gene” theory (de Waal 28, 38–39). Recent mini-series like *The Borgias*, *House of Cards*, and *Game of Thrones* all capture audiences by dramatizing the human capacity for deception, manipulation, and cruelty attendant on competition for power.

5. Posner 45.

6. de Waal 7.

7. Rifkin 1, 43.

8. Rifkin 24.

9. Ibid. 24, 616.

10. de Waal 203.

11. Ibid. 204–05.

12. Ibid. 204.

13. Szalavitz and Perry 4.

14. Ibid.

15. Szalavitz and Perry offer a provocative and interesting assessment of ancient Sparta and Athens in terms of empathy. They sharply contrast their child-rearing practices and suggest how these may have each contributed significantly to their respective cultures. While Athenians were thought to “spoil” their children, they produced many of the cultural achievements that provide the basis for Western civilization. Spartans severely disciplined their children and scorned sentimentality, producing a culture of isolation and political paranoia that eventually imploded. Szalavitz and Perry 117–18.

16. Szalavitz and Perry 5. See www.rootsofempathy.org for details of the program and repeated independent testing confirming the program’s success in developing empathy in students.

17. Appiah 38–44; Isen and Levin 384–88; Pinker 582.

18. Pinker 590.

19. Ibid. 578. In his essay, “Against Empathy,” the philosopher Jesse Prinz, citing these and other reasons, argues that “empathy is, by and large, bad for morality” (216). His concept of empathy, however, is limited to its lower forms only. He eventually suggests “concern” as an alternative to empathy, but this seems to me well captured by the experience of empathic concern described by Hoffman and others (see section 1).

20. Pinker 591.

21. Ibid. 592.

22. Bloom 4.

23. Ibid. 6–7.

24. Ibid. 7.

25. Gallese et al. 595; Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 47, 80–82.

26. Gallese et al. 606.

27. Ibid.

28. Gallese et al. 606–07; Fabbri-Destro and Rizzolatti 173–75; Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 119, 125–26; Kilner et al. 10153; Decety and Lamm 201; Ramachandran 124.

29. Rifkin 84.

30. Siegal 165–66; Giacomo Rizzolatti, as quoted by Sandra Blakeslee in “Cells That Read Minds.”

31. Murray Smith 102.

32. Hoffman 232. As Decety et al. write, “empathy-related behaviors have co-opted more primitive homeostatic processes involved in reward and pain systems in order to facilitate various social attachment processes” (45). This is consistent with a “nested brain-mind” hierarchical approach (45).

33. Hoffman 232–33. There is disagreement as to whether there are many forms of empathy or one “true” form to be distinguished from others so-called. I favor the former approach, both because the various phenomena seem to be in various ways related and because treating them together offers a far more robust, and useful, account of a large and important domain of human experience; the taxonomy of different forms of empathy

presented here is my own, based on my study of the literature. Like Batson, I see “no clear basis—either historical or logical—for favoring one labeling scheme over another. The best one can do is recognize the different phenomena, make clear the labeling scheme one is adopting, and use that scheme consistently” (Batson 8). For more on the debate, see Coplan 3–6.

34. Darwall 8–9.

35. Decety and Meltzoff 68.

36. Hauser 28.

37. Ibid.

38. Pinker 573–74.

39. Bagriel and Young 990–94; Hoffman 233.

40. Coplan 13.

41. Coplan 13; Decety and Lamm 204.

42. Coplan 13; Eisenberg, Murphy, and Shepard 89–90; Gazzinaga 193.

43. Ramachandran 128.

44. Hoffman 233. To what extent this is possible has been a question, but recent studies support it from a physiological standpoint. The studies indicate that while projection strongly activates the amygdala, perspective-taking shows significant reduction of activity in this region, bringing with it reduced feelings of anxiety (Decety et al. 44).

45. Adam Smith, discussing his view of “sympathy” actually captured this quite well: “By the imagination we place ourselves in the other’s situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, enter, as it were, into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him and thence form some idea of the sensations and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them” (261).

46. Hoffman 233.

47. Ibid. 235–36.

48. Ibid. 236–37.

49. An example of this is the story J. K. Rowling tells during her Harvard commencement address in 2011. Rowling recalls her experience of working at Amnesty International, and a day when she heard “a scream of pain and horror such as I had never heard since.” A young African man had just been informed that, in retaliation for his speaking out against his government, his mother had been seized and murdered. Rowling says she will never forget this day, and (perhaps not surprisingly) it has informed much of her life and written work since. Her speech is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHGqp8lz36c>. Other examples of empathic concern may be provoked by reading moving narratives (such as books by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ivan Turgenev, or Charles Dickens), seeing photographs (such as of My Lai or Nazi prison camps), or watching films like *Schindler’s List*.

50. Darwall 16.

51. Mathiesen 246.

52. Darwall 18.

53. Ibid. 19.

54. James, *Principles* 1029.

55. It should be noted that while James freely invokes the term “instinct” to refer to native processes, he fully admits that its physiology was—at his time—little understood (*Principles* 113–14). He offers an account that is “vague to the last degree” and chastises Herbert Spencer for concealing vagueness, improbability, and even self-contradiction “under a great show of precision” (114n5). James wisely leaves the details to subsequent inquiry, which contemporary neuroscience is beginning to reveal.

56. James, *Principles* 1029. This is straightforwardly consistent with de Waal, who points out that no one is saying that from an evolutionary standpoint, it is not in the interest of the individual (or the individual's genes) to be altruistic. It may well be. It's to say the individual is not "really" being selfish (calculating its own benefit) when he or she acts in the interest of others. Evolution has simply endowed the individual with the capacity, or even an uncontrollable tendency, to immediately care for others. See de Waal 115. Confusing this distinction easily misleads one toward the faux "Darwinian" view.

57. James, *Principles* 1029.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid. 1010.

60. Ibid. 1013.

61. Ibid. 1136.

62. EW 2:284. Citations to the *Collected Works of John Dewey* use the conventional method EW (Early Works) or MW (Middle Works) or LW (Later Works), Volume:page number.

63. EW 2:284–85.

64. EW 2:286.

65. MW 5:302.

66. LW 7:239.

67. MW 14:136.

68. MW 14:136. David Hume also saw the need to "correct" sympathy's tendency toward partiality, but suggests "impartiality" rather than cultivating other passions, as the Pragmatists argue (Slote 31)—another example of distinguishing reason from emotion and favoring the former.

69. MW 14:136.

70. MW 14:132.

71. MW 14:216–17; emphasis added. Daniel Stern similarly observes that human beings develop "in a soup of other people's feelings and desires" (as quoted by Hyrdy 62).

72. See also Pappas (198–201); and Fesmire (65–68), for the importance of sympathy to Dewey's ethics. Pappas and Fesmire are two of the few writers to focus on sympathy in Dewey's moral theory. This essay furthers this view by showing how empathy is both fundamental to deliberation as "dramatic rehearsal" and is supported by recent empirical studies in psychology and neuroscience.

73. I write "further" because Americans already contribute an enormous amount of time and money to charitable organizations. See <http://www.nptrust.org/philanthropic-resources/charitable-giving-statistics>. Empathy going awry, such as in the examples Pinker and Bloom provide, may be considered more exception than rule.

74. This is essentially Daniel Kahneman's approach in *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Kahneman identifies ways in which human judgment and decision making is liable to specific forms of bias and blindness, and at the end of each chapter, he offers reformed ways to approach these contexts in way that, by incorporating these habits, correct and improve judgment. These are special cases of the pragmatist approach, which also extends to moral blindness and excess.

75. Although detailed comparison is not possible here, a central difference between the Kantian and Pragmatic approach is that whereas Kant saw human aggression as "innate, ineliminable from human nature, and more or less brutish and ineducable" (Nussbaum 37), Pragmatists consider all human impulses as subject to cultural formation and capable of rational reconstruction. Thus Pragmatists also dismiss the Stoic account of the

relationship between reason and the passions, in which passions are considered irrational and must therefore be rooted out, instead seeking to render the passions more reasonable, balanced, and sensitive to the demands inherent in different sorts of situations. For more on Kant and the Stoics on the relationship between reason and emotion, see Nussbaum 37–42.

76. Myers 406.

77. James, *Writings* 637.

78. *Ibid.* 644–45. As Ralph Barton Perry notes, tolerance was for James a maxim of conduct intimately connected to his perceived limits of sympathy, one he expressed as early as 1873 (224). James wrote: “They *are*, *eodem jure* with myself, and yet I with my pretensions or at least aspirations to adequately represent the world, can never hope to *sympathize* in a genuine sense of the word with their being. And the want of sympathy is not as in the case of some deformed or loathsome human life, for their being is admirable; so admirable that one yearns to be in some way its sharer, partner or accomplice” (Perry 224).

79. James, *Writings* 650.

80. *Ibid.*

81. *Ibid.* 656.

82. *Ibid.*

83. *Ibid.* 657.

84. Haidt 277.

85. *Ibid.* 231.

86. When you join a totalizing group, for example, a fascist one, it may feel empowering at first, but is then constraining, and leaving the group can be problematic. The 1981 documentary “The Wave” and subsequent 2008 film, *Die Welle* [The wave] capture these dynamics.

87. James, *Principles* 282.

88. LW 2:327–28.

89. Recent experiments involving public goods games indicate that such virtuous spirals are possible; where parties repeatedly interact with one another, games involving incentives rewarding participation outperform those that use punishment to discourage defection (Rand et al. 1275).

90. See Hyrdy 6; Szalavitz and Perry 29, 134; Tomasello et al. 6–13. According to Tomasello et al., studies of children indicate that the impulse to help is natural (not taught), self-rewarding (it does not need reward, and reward may actually diminish the impulse), and mediated by empathic concern for another person. De Waal, Leimgruber, and Greenberg reach similar conclusions with capuchin monkeys, finding that helping is self-rewarding. de Waal, Leimgruber, and Greenberg 13687.

91. James, *Principles* 646.

REFERENCES

- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Experiments in Ethics*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008.
- Batson, C. Daniel. “These Things Called Empathy.” *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*. Ed. Jean Decety and William Ickes. Cambridge: MIT P, 2009. 3–15.
- Bagriel, Shira, and Ariana F. Young. “Becoming a Vampire without Being Bitten: The Narrative Collective-Assimilation Hypothesis.” *Psychological Science* 22.8 (2011): 990–94.

- Blakeslee, Sandra. "Cells That Read Minds." *New York Times* 10 Jan. 2006. 6 Aug. 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/10/science/10mirr.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0>.
- Bloom, Paul. "The Baby in the Well." *New Yorker* 20 May 2013. 6 Aug. 2013. <http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2013/05/20/130520crat_atlarge_bloom>.
- Coplan, Amy. "Understanding Empathy: Its Features and Effects." *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*. Ed. Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. 3–18.
- Darwall, Stephen. "Being With." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 49 (2011): 4–24.
- Darwin, Charles. "The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex." *The Portable Charles Darwin*. Ed. Duncan M. Porter and Peter W. Graham. New York: Penguin, 1993. 321–61.
- Decety, Jean, and Claus Lamm. "Empathy Versus Personal Distress." *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*. Ed. Jean Decety and William Ickes. Cambridge: MIT P, 2009. 199–213.
- Decety, Jean, and Andrew N. Meltzoff. "Empathy, Imitation, and the Social Brain." *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*. Ed. Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. 58–81.
- Decety, Jean, Greg J. Norman, Gary G. Berntson, and John T. Cacioppo. "A Neurobehavioral Evolutionary Perspective on the Mechanisms Underlying Empathy." *Progress in Neurobiology* 98.1 (2012): 38–48.
- de Waal, Frans. *The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society*. New York: Harmony Books, 2009.
- de Waal, Frans, Kristin Leimgruber, and Amanda R. Greenberg. "Giving Is Self-Rewarding for Monkeys." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 105.36 (2008): 13685–89.
- Dewey, John. *The Collected Works of John Dewey: The Electronic Edition*. Ed. Larry A. Hickman. Charlottesville: Intelix Corporation, 1996. [cited in text as Early Works (EW), Middle Works (MW), or Later Works (LW), followed by Volume:page number]
- Eisenberg, Nancy, Bridget C. Murphy, and Stephanie Shepard. "The Development of Empathic Accuracy." *Empathic Accuracy*. Ed. William Ickes. New York: Guilford P, 1997. 73–116.
- Fabbri-Destro, Maddalena, and Giacomo Rizzolatti. "Mirror Neurons and Mirror Systems in Monkeys and Humans." *Physiology* 23 (2008): 171–79.
- Fesmire, Steven. *Moral Imagination: Pragmatism in Ethics*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2003.
- Gallese, Vittorio, Luciano Fadiga, Leonardo Fogassi, and Giacomo Rizzolatti. "Action Recognition in the Premotor Cortex." *Brain* 119.2 (1996): 593–609.
- Gazzinaga, Michael S. *Human: The Science Behind What Makes Us Unique*. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.
- Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Penguin, 2012.
- Hauser, Marc D. *Moral Minds: How Nature Designed Our Universal Sense of Right and Wrong*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006.
- Hoffman, Martin. "Empathy, Justice, and the Law." *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*. Ed. Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. 230–54.
- Hyrdy, Sarah Blaffer. *Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009.
- Isen, Alice M., and Paula F. Levin. "Effect of Feeling Good on Helping: Cookies and Kindness." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 21.3 (1972): 384–88.
- James, William. *The Principles of Psychology*. Vols. 1–2. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1981.

- . *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition*. Ed. John J. McDermott. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1976.
- Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.
- Kilner, James M., Alice Neal, Nikolaus Weiskopf, Karl J. Friston, and Chris D. Frith. "Evidence of Mirror Neurons in Human Inferior Frontal Gyrus." *Journal of Neuroscience* 29.32 (2009): 10153–59.
- Mathiesen, Kay. "Collective Consciousness." *Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind*. Ed. David Woodruff Smith and Amie L. Thmasson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 235–52.
- Myers, Gerald E. *William James: His Life and Thought*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986.
- Nussbaum, Martha. "Kant and Cosmopolitanism." *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*. Ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held. Cambridge: Polity, 2010. 27–44.
- Pappas, Gregory Fernando. *John Dewey's Ethics: Democracy as Experience*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008.
- Perry, Ralph Barton. *The Thought and Character of William James*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1996.
- Pinker, Steven. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and Its Causes*. New York: Penguin, 2011.
- Posner, Richard A. *Law, Pragmatism, and Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003.
- Prinz, Jesse. "Against Empathy." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 49 (supp. 1, 2011): 214–33.
- Ramachandran, V. S. *The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human*. New York: Norton, 2011.
- Rand, David G., Anna Dreber, Tore Ellingsen, Drew Fudenberg, and Martin Nowak. "Positive Interactions Promote Public Cooperation." *Science* 325.5945 (2009): 1272–75.
- Rifkin, Jeremy. *The Empathic Civilization*. New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2008.
- Rizzolatti, Giacomo, and Corrado Sinigaglia. *Mirrors in the Brain: How Our Minds Share Actions and Emotions*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.
- Siegel, Daniel. *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*. New York: Norton, 2007.
- Slote, Michael. *Moral Sentimentalism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010.
- Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Ed. David Daiches Raphael and Alec Lawrence Macfie. Oxford: Clarendon, 1976.
- Smith, Murray. "Empathy, Expansionism, and the Extended Mind." *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*. Ed. Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. 99–117.
- Stueber, Karsten. *Rediscovering Empathy: Agency, Folk Psychology, and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2006.
- Szalavitz, Maia, and Bruce D. Perry. *Born for Love: Why Empathy is Essential—and Endangered*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010.
- Tomasello, Michael, Carol Deweck, Joan Silk, Brian Skyrms, and Elizabeth Spelke. *Why We Cooperate*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2009.