



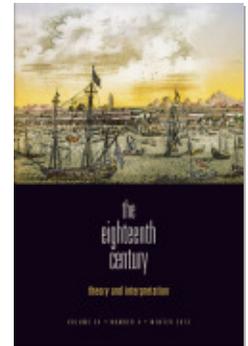
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The Impossibility of Sympathy

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I know no book or system of moral philosophy written with sufficient power to melt into our affections.

—Wordsworth¹

I. THE SEARCH FOR SYMPATHY

At the time that Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin were warning of the political dangers of empathy (*Einfühlung*), the North American academy was embracing the eighteenth century as a century of feeling, sensibility, and sympathy.² In *From Classic to Romantic* (1946), Walter Jackson Bate had made the case for the “age of feeling,” and in the 1950s Northrop Frye introduced his influential notion of the “age of sensibility” as a broad description of literature after Pope and before Wordsworth.³ More recently, G. J. Barker-Benfield has characterized the eighteenth century as a period dominated by “the culture of sensibility,” or what he calls a “new psychoperceptual paradigm” which accounted for the volatile relation between consciousness, gender, and consumerism.⁴ For Barker-Benfield, such prominent critics of sensibility as Mary Wollstonecraft were also part of this wider “culture of sensibility.”⁵ This suggests there was an economy of sensibility that included, and was sustained by, critiques of sensibility.⁶ John Mullan, in his 1990 work, *Sentiment and Sociability*, describes this economy of sympathy as an ongoing tension between the limitations of an ideal public sociability and an increasingly fraught private sensibility.⁷ Whether celebrated or charted by its political, economic, and social failings, since at least the 1940s it has been taken for granted in eighteenth-century studies that “sympathy,” the ability to be affected by or to enter into the feelings of others, is the concept *par excellence* of the eighteenth century.⁸

In *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (1996), Jerome McGann accounted for a recent interest in sensibility by noting the decline of the modernist rejection of sensibility and sentiment.⁹ McGann offers a broad out-

line for a narrative of sensibility and sentiment in the eighteenth century. Sensibility, or what he calls “the mind in the body,” can be distinguished from sentiment, or “the body in the mind.” From 1740 to 1780, he argues, sentiment “overtakes and subsumes” sensibility. According to McGann, the poetics of the eighteenth century can be described through a refined and discriminating materialization (sensibility) being displaced by an excessive materialization (sentiment). A constative sympathy is displaced by a performative sympathy that we happy few, we readers of T. S. Eliot, then forgot how to perform.¹⁰

There is something very attractive and beguiling, even sympathetic, about this narrative of sensibility as the move from a discriminating to an excessive materialization, and it certainly has an echo of the sweep and dynamic of Bate’s “age of feeling” and Frye’s “age of sensibility.” Though McGann begins with Locke, this fall from sense as a kind of refined and refining act of discrimination recalls Aristotle’s definition of touch as an “exactness of discrimination” in *On the Soul* (*Peri psukhēs*). “While in respect of all the other senses we fall below many species of animals,” Aristotle observes, “in respect of touch [*aphēn*] we far excel all other species in exactness of discrimination [*diapheróntōs akriboi*]. This is why man is the most intelligent of animals.”¹¹ McGann begins with the assumption of a discriminating sense—of a sense that can then be dulled and defused in effusions of sentiment. It is perhaps not fortuitous that McGann’s distinction recalls Wordsworth’s warning in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) that the “present state of the public taste in this country” is blunting “the discriminating powers of the mind.”¹²

In the midst of trying to keep “sentiment” away from “sensibility” to support his narrative, McGann argues that today the only way we can read the literature of sensibility and sentimentality in the “spirit” of the eighteenth century is “by entering into those conventions, by reading in the same spirit that the author writ.” “To do this,” he adds, “requires a considerable effort of sympathetic identification.”¹³ In other words, it is only by employing the most powerful trope of sympathy, the ability to enter imaginatively into the feelings of another person, that we can understand how sensibility and sentiment operated in the eighteenth century. The spirit or soul of McGann’s attempt to construct a narrative of feeling in this period is a reliance on the sympathetic imagination. Summarizing a long-standing tradition of eighteenth-century studies, McGann’s work suggests that we can only enter into the problem of sympathy by *already* sympathizing with sympathy.

II. THE SOUL, BEING TOUCHED, AND THE UNTOUCHABLE

In his late work, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy* (2000), Jacques Derrida explored the legacy of Aristotle’s *On the Soul* in an intricate reading of Nancy and the French phenomenological tradition. For Derrida, thinking about *being touched*, about all the discriminations and sensibilities of tact that make sympathy and

sensibility possible, takes us back to the Aristotelian concept of the soul. As Derrida writes, “Aristotle’s *Peri psukhēs* had already insisted on this: both the tangible and the intangible are the objects of touch (*hē hapē tou haptou kai anaptou*). Once this incredible ‘truth’ has been uttered, it will resonate down to the twentieth century, even within discourses apparently utterly foreign to any Aristotelianism.”¹⁴ For Aristotle, “nothing except what has soul in it is capable of sensation.”¹⁵ Without the soul, there can be no sensation of touching or being touched, while the soul itself remains *untouchable*. The concept of the soul is at once the possibility of any history of materialization, of sensation, sensibility, or sympathy (of being touched), and it is also that which has always excluded itself from such a history (the *untouchable*).

From his earliest readings of Edmund Husserl, Derrida was interested in how the concept of the soul still operated in phenomenology.¹⁶ According to Derrida, in his attempts to avoid the traps of both empiricism and psychologism, as well as historicism and ahistoricism, Husserl ultimately turned to “the Idea in the Kantian Sense” as an origin of phenomenology that cannot itself undergo a phenomenological analysis (phenomenology cannot touch it).¹⁷ This ideal origin is a pure possibility and, like the concept of the soul, relies on a remarkable structure: *not x but the possibility of x*. For Derrida, this structure of pure possibility, of the *untouchable* as the origin of being touched, creates the conditions of *idealization*, or the process in which Husserl moves from a sensible and imaginary ideality to “a higher, absolutely objective, exact and nonsensible ideality.”¹⁸

As Derrida suggested, while one should always be attentive to the idealization or progressive escape from the sensuous and the material in the eighteenth century, one should also be wary in this period of the implicit idealization of sense and touch. Empiricism is predicated on the assumption that the external world is “always already there” as a given, and in turn sparks off a refined internal machine that sees, hears, smells, touches, and tastes, and comes to feel and to know that this is feeling, and to think and to reason far beyond the mere world of feeling. While empiricists would argue that we are always limited by our initial reliance on what is outside of us and the idealists would argue that we can ultimately transcend our humble origins (not least because, as Kant would argue, we must always have a wondrous internal machine that makes the idea of experience itself possible), both of these philosophical positions look back to Aristotle’s *Peri psukhēs*.

For Aristotle, while flesh is the medium of touch, the “power of perceiving the tangible is seated inside [*entòs*].”¹⁹ Aristotle insists that the faculty of sensation is only potential and not actual and this leads Derrida to argue in *On Touching* that sense “does not sense *itself*; it does not auto-affect itself without the motion of an exterior object.”²⁰ The internal power of sensation and the possibility of touch—and of being touched—is in itself *insufficient*: it is always in need of an other that is outside and that moves. This leads Derrida to describe

contact as a moving interval or gap. When the self touches itself there is always a spacing, “a losing contact with itself, precisely in touching itself.”²¹ For Derrida, the legacy of the concept of the soul as a framework for thinking about touching, being touched, and the persistence of the untouchable has created a discourse of impossibility and confession. The *limit* between the tangible and the intangible is itself untouchable, and when one tries to touch on this limit it becomes an impossibility: a tangible untouchable limit. Faced with this impossibility, we can never stop confessing the desire or temptation or even the hoped-for redemption of touching the untouchable.²²

In addressing the problem that McGann’s work identifies as the hermeneutic circle of imaginative sympathy, of already sympathizing with sympathy to enter into the spirit of eighteenth-century discourses of sympathy, Derrida’s reading of Aristotle suggests that sympathy can be seen not so much as an idealization of the untouchable that is incessantly being touched, but rather as an economy of two idealizations: *the untouchable—that touches everything*. In the first half of the eighteenth century there were some significant forms of sympathy, most commonly associated with Frances Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith, that were already insufficient—and impossible.

III. CONTESTING THE SPIRIT AND INVENTING THE BODY

One can begin to question the genealogy of the concept of sympathy in eighteenth-century studies by turning to the work of R. S. Crane (1886–1967), Donald Greene (1914–97), and G. S. Rousseau (1941–). In 1934, Crane made the influential case for locating the origins of the eighteenth-century notion of the “Man of Feeling” in the Latitudinarian movements of the late seventeenth century. For Crane, the emphasis in the 1750s on the natural pleasures of a benevolent tenderness to all represents a “complex of doctrines, which a hundred years before 1750 would have been frowned upon, had it ever been presented to them, by representatives of every school of ethical or religious thought.”²³ The “whole movement” of sensibility and sentimentalism becomes “somewhat more intelligible historically,” Crane argues, if one locates its first gestures in the “anti-Puritan, anti-Stoic, and anti-Hobbesian divines of the Latitudinarian school” who were writing from the 1670s to the 1690s.²⁴

Crane believed that an historical explanation for the origin of the eighteenth-century “cult of sensibility” should be found “not so much in the teaching of individual lay moralists after 1700, as in the combined influence of numerous Anglican divines of the Latitudinarian tradition.”²⁵ Today, in the prevalence of various forms of historicism, we can appreciate Crane’s attempts to move beyond the narrow causal explanation of a history of ideas founded on the thought of a few great minds. Crane suggests—and he makes it clear that this is no more than a suggestion or hypothesis—that one can find a discernable culture or collective “complex of doctrines” to account for the “cult of sensibil-

ity" in the Latitudinarians.²⁶ At the same time, as Greene persuasively argued in an article from 1977, in his search for a complex seventeenth-century origin of sensibility Crane invents an anachronistic historical tradition: the 1670s–1690s only become "intelligible" through the 1750s–1770s.²⁷

Greene offers a welcome corrective lesson in Anglican doctrine and an implicit warning in using religion as a generalized—Crane would perhaps say complex—historical explanation for philosophical and literary developments. Greene's systematic refutation of Crane's hypothesis is founded primarily on what he sees as a fundamental misunderstanding of the so-called Latitudinarians, who constituted not so much a group or movement as a fairly orthodox perspective of inclusive mediation in the conflicts between the Puritans and the High Church Anglicans.²⁸ Greene challenges Crane's association of the Latitudinarians with a wholesale rejection of the "Puritan dogma of justification solely by faith" that, he points out, repeats the heresy of Pelagianism by trying to circumvent the orthodoxies of original sin through valuing good works—ethical and benevolent actions—above and beyond faith.²⁹

Greene's cautionary tale of confusing an optimistic secular ethics with an intricate history of religion is most compelling when he disputes Crane's association of the Latitudinarians with a pleasurable self-approbation in undertaking benevolent actions.³⁰ Hutcheson, the great advocate of the ethics of benevolence in the eighteenth century, would insist that no authentic moral act could involve the pleasure of an assured good conscience. As Greene argues, this view was consistent with a "general Protestantism of the time."³¹ Crane's search for the origins of sensibility perhaps owes more to Aristotle than to Augustine.³²

In a paper from 1973, G. S. Rousseau offered a distinct departure from these debates over the "spirit" of the origins of sensibility and the ethics of imaginative sympathy.³³ With a critical but appreciative eye on Thomas Kuhn and Michel Foucault, Rousseau proposes a "materialist" and secular seventeenth-century origin for eighteenth-century discourses of sensibility. It is John Locke, Rousseau argues, who is the first to connect the physical sciences to the examination of ethical, political, and religious questions, inaugurating the "science of man" that would come to dominate the eighteenth century.³⁴ While one could see this as a return to the very "individual lay moralists" and rather disembodied history of ideas that Crane implicitly challenged, Rousseau also attempted to identify a persuasive culture or "complex of doctrines" to account for the link between ethics and physiology and the construction of sensation in philosophy and science in the late seventeenth century as the origin of the mid-eighteenth-century "cults" of sensibility and sentiment.³⁵

Anticipating McGann's distinctions between different forms of materialization, Rousseau argues that sensibility preceded sentimentalism in the eighteenth century, while accepting that this "distinction is grey, never black and white."³⁶ For Rousseau, "Crane's intuition"—and note that it is question of intuition—on the seventeenth century origins of sensibility "is sound but his reasons are

altogether unacceptable." Crane cannot claim that a religious emphasis on benevolence and good works was unique to the period, but it is in this period that a "scientific model" for the "self-conscious personality" emerges.³⁷ One might be tempted to suggest that it is not in the 1670s, but in the 1630s with René Descartes's formulation of the *cogito* that a notion, at least in philosophy, of a "self-conscious personality" presents itself.³⁸ As much as Crane may invent a Latitudinarian Man of Feeling, Rousseau also invents the sensitive body as the possibility of the "self-conscious personality." As Rousseau remarks in the introduction to a 2004 republication of his article, "the body, after all, told the truth about sensibility through its neurophysiological mechanism."³⁹ And it is not entirely inappropriate in view of Derrida's reading of the idealization of both the "soul" and of "touch" that Rousseau finds his originary scene in the work of Thomas Willis, teacher of Locke at Oxford and the "first scientist clearly and loudly to posit that the seat of the soul is strictly limited to the brain, nowhere else."⁴⁰ It is from this containment or relocation of the concept of the soul, Rousseau argues, that one can deduce the heightened interests in the nerves, fibers, and animal spirits of the body and witnesses the true origins of the eighteenth-century concept of sensibility.⁴¹

IV. THE MILITANCY OF FELLOW FEELING

In the midst of the eighteenth century, Hume had insisted that there is a general "social sympathy" or "fellow feeling with human happiness or misery."⁴² Smith in turn placed fellow feeling at the heart of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). As Smith writes at the outset of his treatise: "Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever."⁴³ We can take the concept of fellow feeling as one possible example for beginning to re-think the status of sympathy in eighteenth-century studies.

While fellow feeling was ostensibly gaining the authority of a moderate and moderating effusion of common moral sentiment after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the eighteenth century was also a century of reluctant toleration. In 1714 there was a concerted attempt to reverse the 1689 Act of Toleration, itself a partial and limited gesture of indulgence.⁴⁴ As Julian Hoppit has observed, 1689 also shattered "the façade of orthodoxy's hegemony," marking the end the elusive Anglican ideal of a single religious sentiment in the English Church.⁴⁵ At the same time, John Milton's often pragmatic and sometimes strategic and always deeply felt calls for the liberty of individual experience are echoed in Locke's 1685 *Epistola de Toleratione*.⁴⁶ Locke gestures to the possibility of a balance between a stable and ordered commonwealth and respect for the dictates of individual "reason and conscience" that "cannot be compelled by any out-

ward force."⁴⁷ Locke also makes a point of criticizing those who persecute "on the plea of religion . . . out of friendship and kindness." He contrasts this use of *amicitia* as part of a tradition of intolerance to a toleration founded on *societas* or "the natural fellowship of common humanity."⁴⁸

Some thirty-five years earlier, in defining the various passions in *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes had written that pity for another, "ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may befall himselfe; and therefore is called also COMPASSION, and on the phrase of this present time a FELLOW-FEELING."⁴⁹ Hobbes's emphasis "on the phrase of this present time" suggests that the phrase "fellow feeling" had in fact gained a particular resonance by the early 1650s. As a "phrase of this present time," Hobbes may have been referring to an underlying fellow feeling that could resist the dangers of faction and civil war. One could see this as part of the short-lived attempt to not take sides in the English Civil War. As John Morrill has pointed out, during the Civil War there were a number of neutralist or anti-war movements, which attempted to contain and diffuse social breakdown and division in the conflict between the Parliament and the King. These movements culminated in the Clubmen risings in 1645.⁵⁰

However, it is more likely that Hobbes is highlighting a far more divisive and volatile Puritan and Presbyterian use of the language of fellow feeling. As Donald Kelley has pointed out, the rise of Puritanism in the sixteenth century was marked by a war of words in which both sides evoked terms and counter terms and created strategic neologisms. Hobbes's use of the phrase "fellow feeling" can be seen as a reaction against the Presbyterian and Parliamentary rhetoric of the Civil War, which had its origins in the polemical linguistic battles between Puritans and Anglicans in the late sixteenth century.⁵¹ It is by turning briefly back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that one can perhaps begin to find a different genealogy for the economies of sympathy in eighteenth-century studies and question the readings of sympathy founded on Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith.

With the growing influence of Calvinism in the 1580s, the older tradition of being a fellow heir and partaker of the body of Christ was treated as a sophisticated articulation of the doctrine of election.⁵² One can see this in the rhetoric that surrounded the Martin Marprelate controversy of 1588–89.⁵³ As Peter Lake has noted, with their calls for martyrdom and the shedding of blood, the Martin Marprelate tracts "marked the final abandonment of the claim to inclusion within the magic circle of protestant responsibility."⁵⁴ John Udall (c. 1560–92), who was indirectly involved in the Marprelate controversy and died in prison under a death sentence, offered one of the earliest uses of the phrase "fellow feeling" in his 1584 work, *Obedience to the Gospell*:

Séeing by the mercifull calling of God, we are members of one body, werof Iesus Christ is the head, and linked together by one spirit, the fellowe féeling of the grieffe of others, (if we be féeling members in deéde) constraineth vs to doo good

one to another: and therefore especially to informe those that néede, in the way of righteousness.⁵⁵

Fellow feeling, Udall suggests, derives from being “members of one body” and being “linked together by one spirit” through Christ. Puritan fellow feeling confirms an exclusive dispensation: we “doo good one to another,” we have a “fellowe feeling of the grieffe of others,” but this divinely inspired compassion originates in a select few who only feel for “those that néede, in the way of righteousness.” As the popular Puritan writer William Perkins (1558–1602) suggested in *A Golden Chaine* (1591), “every Christian man . . . must carrie about him a fellow-feeling, that is, an heart touched with compassion in regard of all the miseries that befall either the whole Church or any member thertoof.” This compassion is directed by the larger question of admonishment: we feel fellow feeling with a member of the Church because they have wandered from the right path.⁵⁶ In the midst of the heightened turn towards Calvinism and Presbyterianism at the end of the sixteenth century and at the start of the seventeenth century, fellow feeling was reclaimed as an exclusive and excluding neologism of militant religious fervor.

By the 1620s, and in no small part due to the efforts of George Abbot (1562–1633), Archbishop of Canterbury from 1611 until his death, the Anglican Church began to assert a more extensive concept of fellow feeling. Arguing for a broader responsibility towards “the common good” and “the publike bodie,” Abbot attempted to extend the concept of fellow feeling beyond the narrow Puritan trinity of fellowship (fellow feeling with other persecuted Puritans; fellow feeling for Puritan brethren who have wandered from the right path; fellow feeling for non-Puritans who have yet to discover the right path). Abbot writes:

Thus the faithful steward doth, being alwaies pleased best when the common good doth flourish; not thinking himsef a bodie besides the publike bodie, and as two substances to be contradivided things, and all well which is scraped and scratched away from the members, but a head unto that bodie where and in which he liveth, and so to have a fellow-feeling of the sufferings of others.⁵⁷

In describing in 1626 the “rules of giving to the poor,” the moderate Anglican Lancelot Andrewes observed: “as the Heathen said, we must give not *homini*, to this man, but *humanitati*, to mankinde, a fellow feeling compassion is due to nature, and to the Law we must give our approbation.”⁵⁸ It is not fortuitous that Andrewes uses fellow feeling to illustrate the need to extend one’s sympathy beyond one (Puritan) man to all men. Nonetheless, by the early 1640s the Civil War revived the Puritan use of fellow feeling as a militant concept and led to its direct association with the Parliamentary cause: fellow feeling became part of the language of politics and war.⁵⁹ It is in this context that one can understand

Hobbes's emphasis in *Leviathan* on the recent political uses and abuses of the phrase fellow feeling.⁶⁰

In the midst of the persecution of the dissenters after the Restoration, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) evokes a Puritan tradition of fellow feeling under siege.⁶¹ When Christian is inspired by his divine dream and his relations believe that "some frenzy distemper had got into his head," he pities them because they have not been touched.⁶² Three years later, John Dryden would confirm the lasting Puritan resonance of the phrase "fellow feeling" when he wrote in *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) of "a jury of dissenting Jews; / Whose fellow-feeling in the godly cause / Would free the suffering saint from human laws."⁶³ Rather than being a concept that emerged in reaction to the Puritans (or one that had no relation to the religious conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth century), one could argue that the eighteenth-century concept of sympathetic fellow feeling has its origins in a militant Puritan rhetoric of intolerance, warfare, and persecution. When Crane argued that it would not be possible to find a theory of sensibility in 1650, one can think of the words of the Puritan Perkins, writing at the start of the seventeenth century:

And the same affection should be in euerie one of vs towards the poore afflicted seruants of Christ: seeing they bee our fellow-members, wee should haue a fellow-feeling with them, weeping with them that weepe, and shew our compassion in pitying them. If the foote be procked, the head stoopes, the eye beholds and looks on it, the finger puls it out, the hand applies the plaister, the other foote is readie to runne for helpe, the tongue to aske for counsell, & all the members are readie to affect their mutuall helpe in pitie and fellow-feeling.⁶⁴

While one can argue that in the last decades of the seventeenth century the language of fellow feeling begins to circulate amongst a number of different religious denominations and political factions and to lose its specific theological and political associations with the Puritans, its legacy is still at work in the "birth" of a more secular notion of sympathy.⁶⁵ On Friday, 15 February 1712, John Hughes contributed his second paper to *The Spectator*. Hughes introduces the character of Emilia, whose beauty, "rational piety," and "modest Hope" are held as an example of the "Heroism of Christianity." He contrasts the "cheerful Resignation" of Emilia in the face of hardship to the general appearance of "Severity" and "Ostentation" in the religious practice of the day. Inspired by Emilia as a "Pattern of Female Excellence," Hughes goes on to offer an alternative ground for morality:

By a generous Sympathy in Nature, we feel ourselves disposed to mourn when any of our Fellow Creatures are afflicted; but injured Innocence and Beauty in Distress, is an Object that carries in it something inexpressibly moving: It Softens

the most manly Heart and the tenderest Sensations of Love and Compassion, till at length it confesses its Humanity and flows out into Tears.⁶⁶

A public sense of sympathy, a secular or cultural warm-hearted feeling towards all "our Fellow Creatures," Hughes suggests, is the most authentic expression of the moral imperatives of religion. One can see this not only as the first articulation of the various "ages" of feeling, sentiment, and sensibility, but also as a hollowing out of a divisive and difficult concept. At the start of the eighteenth century, fellow feeling becomes a concept that is defined by the *absence* of its militant theological and political heritage.

Three months after his essay on Emilia, Hughes contributed a third paper to *The Spectator*. In the story of Amanda, he traces the fall into poverty and debt of her father and the Lord of the Manor's attempts to blackmail her into becoming his mistress at the price of saving her family from ruin. In a scene that anticipates Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740/41), the Lord of the Manor's evil intentions only change when he reads a letter from Amanda's mother. Hughes describes what will become an archetypal scene of sympathy in the eighteenth century: "He was not a little moved at so true a Picture of Virtue in Distress . . . [and when Amanda] burst into Tears, he could no longer refrain from bearing a part in her sorrow."⁶⁷

Hughes's summation of the force of sympathetic fellow feeling in the pages of *The Spectator* in 1712 is not so surprising when one learns that he came from a Puritan family, and that his grandfather had been a dissenting preacher.⁶⁸ Hughes was educated at dissenting schools, and appears to have conformed only in the late 1690s. One can see Hughes's work in *The Spectator* as a "softening" of his Puritan background in the call for a less "severe" morality, but his evocation of "bearing a part in sorrow" can also be treated as the articulation of a distinctly Puritan heritage of fellow feeling which was fast losing its religious identity in the first decades of the new century. The supposedly universal appeal of scenes of virtue in distress, beyond any history or particularity, is already an idealization or an absence determined by the Puritan legacy of the concept of fellow feeling. This idealized absence of sympathy begins at the start of the eighteenth century, and it could define the role played by sympathy throughout this period. Hughes himself ended one of his last published poems, "The Ecstasy" (1720), with a vision of a society marked by a profound loss of sympathy. It is a world very much in need of tears:

And now far off the rolling globe appears;
Its scatter'd Nations I survey,
And all the Mass of Earth and Sea;
Oh object well deserving Tears!⁶⁹

V. THE UNTOUCHABLE—THAT TOUCHES EVERYTHING

As Derrida noted in his reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Of Grammatology* (1967), in the eighteenth century “sympathy”—as the untouchable that touches everything—cannot avoid repeatedly marking the discontinuities of experience. For Rousseau, Derrida argues, “when sensible presence is exceeded by its image, we can imagine and judge that the other feels and suffers. Yet, we neither can nor should *simply experience* the suffering of others by *itself*.” Sympathy, or the difficult idealization of sympathy, requires “a certain distance.” The identification of fellow feeling in the eighteenth century, its very ethics and its inevitable insufficiency, “supposes a certain nonidentification,” a “certain nonpresence within presence.”⁷⁰

In the wake of Martin Heidegger, Derrida does not simply characterize Western metaphysics as a tradition of presence, of the presumption of a self-evident subject or object, but also warns against an attempt to overcome or escape from this tradition by calculating on absence as an absolute resource or a pure possibility of alterity or resistance. As he observed, “one cannot help wishing to master absence and yet we must always let go.”⁷¹ Derrida’s response to this legacy from the eighteenth century was to argue for an interlacing oscillation that gives itself neither to presence nor absence. If one takes the genealogy of fellow feeling as one way, among many others, of characterizing the idealization of a concept of sympathy that is always confronting its own impossibility, one could see “sympathy” as a supplement—a necessary addition that replaces and displaces—of moral philosophy in the eighteenth century. At the same time, the perception of the absence or profound insufficiency of sympathy at the outset of the eighteenth century can also be seen as still operating within the metaphysical alternatives of presence and absence.

Two years after Hughes’s contributions to *The Spectator*, and some seventy years before Immanuel Kant relegated feeling to a pathology that could never sustain a consistent concept of morality, Bernard Mandeville asserted a provocative proposition in *The Fable of the Bees* (1714): “Pity no Virtue, and why.” He writes:

Pity, tho’ it is the most gentle and the least mischievous of all of our Passions, is yet as much a *Frailty* of our Nature, as Anger, Pride, or Fear. The weakest Minds have generally the greatest share of it, for which Reason none are more Compassionate than Women and Children. It must be own’d, that of all our Weaknesses it is the most amiable, and bears the greatest Resemblance to Virtue; nay, without a considerable mixture of it the Society could hardly subsist: But as it is an impulse of Nature, that consults neither the publick Interest nor our own Reason, it may produce Evil as well as Good.⁷²

We cannot do without pity in society, Mandeville argues, but it is also no more than “an impulse of Nature.” Pity is a dangerous social affection because it is

weak. It is a fragile mechanical impulse, a passion that does not have the stature or clarity of a freely chosen act of virtue. Kant would later argue that feeling by chance what we cannot help but feel does not make us virtuous or guarantee a virtuous society. "Where there is no freedom, the moral law would not be encountered at all in ourselves," he observes in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788).⁷³ According to James Boswell, Samuel Johnson would also insist that the "rational and just nature of sympathy" was founded not on the extent of one's feeling but by the measure of one's actions.⁷⁴

Mandeville argues that pity has "helped destroy the Honour of Virgins, and corrupted the Integrity of Judges . . . [and] whosoever acts from it as a Principle, what good soever he may bring to the Society, has nothing to boast of but that he has indulged a Passion that has happened to be beneficial to the Publick." He contrasts this contingent mechanical impulse of haphazard public benefit to the *gravitas* of a Roman virtue that chooses, silently, to act disinterestedly: "Such men as without complying with any Weakness of their own, can part from what they value themselves, and from no other Motive but their love to Goodness, perform a worthy Action in Silence: Such Men, I confess, have acquired more refin'd Notions of Virtue than those that I have hitherto spoken of."⁷⁵ Mandeville goes on to suggest that such acts of virtue or rational self-denial are rare in an ostensibly polite commercial society—but they are possible.⁷⁶ For Mandeville and Kant, one cannot rely on pity or sympathy as the ground for defining moral action.

In part in response to Mandeville, Francis Hutcheson argued that natural and involuntary feelings of approval are a sign of an inherent benevolent interest in others that is not only concerned with "the publick Interest," but also the very ground and possibility of civil society. Precisely because pity is an involuntary impulse, Hutcheson insists, it "proves *Benevolence* to be *natural* to us," and we cannot help but be "dispos'd to study the Interest of others, without any views of *private Advantage*." Our compassion for the plight of others, he argues, "immediately appears in our *Countenance*, if we do not study to prevent it." We "*mechanically*" feel, Hutcheson writes, and this is proof of "the Voice of NATURE, understood by all Nations."⁷⁷

While Hutcheson celebrated this universal mechanical voice of nature that passes through all of us whether we will or no, and has no history or difficult inheritance to trouble its work, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury was not as sanguine about this untouchable automatic sympathy. In "A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm to My Lord ****" (1708), Shaftesbury expresses his well-known anxiety about the mechanical nature of sympathy: "One may with good reason call every passion 'panic' which is raised in a multitude and conveyed by aspect or, as it were, by contact or sympathy."⁷⁸ As a "social and communicative" affection, sympathy can be dangerous because it is neither inherently natural nor virtuous—and because it is a concept with a history. At the same time, in an almost utopian attempt to outmaneuver Hobbes, Shaft-

esbury argues that the power of the magistrate should be guided by “a kind sympathy”:

The magistrate, if he be any artist, should have a gentler hand and, instead of caustics, incisions and amputations, should be using the softest balms, and, with a kind sympathy, entering into the concern of the people and taking, as it were, their passion upon him, should, when he has soothed and satisfied it, endeavour, by cheerful ways, to divert and heal it.⁷⁹

The anxiety of Shaftesbury and the conviction of Mandeville that sympathy is in itself not a clear and universal index of morality can be seen as the ongoing inheritance of the seventeenth-century wars over fellow feeling, as the most sympathetic and militant of concepts.

Hutcheson’s works of the 1720s–1740s respond to this concern about the stability and effectiveness of sympathy by placing the moral sense beyond the touch of both the individual and society. The moral sense is a “*natural determination*” of approval or disapproval that I cannot “alter or stop.”⁸⁰ My natural feelings of “*esteem*” or “*contempt*,” he argues, cannot be manufactured by any external inducements or by my own desire, “choice or volition.”⁸¹ What I feel for others cannot be touched either by myself or by society. The moral sense can be described as a form of Lévinasian infinity or absolute alterity, *avant la lettre*.⁸² For Hutcheson, teacher of Smith and precursor of Hume, sympathy is untouchable, a pure possibility of morality that always remains moral.

With Hutcheson, sympathy becomes the untouchable authentic emotion of approval for virtuous actions in society: it is the register of the finest internal virtues. This search for the untouchable, for an ideal general standard that grounds both moral judgements and the organization of society, can be traced at least back to Hobbes. Hobbes’s *Leviathan* can be seen as the description of an almost ideal world. It is at once a very serious response to the philosophical, political, and religious events of the 1640s and a utopian tract. Human reason is fallible, private reasoning an index of ungovernable differences, and it is only an ideal sovereign authority that can provide peace and stability for the commonwealth.⁸³ In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke transfers this ideal public authority to the ideal internal authority of simple ideas. Like the letters of the alphabet, one cannot add or subtract a simple idea: they are a finite and fixed stock of basic building blocks that *cannot be touched*.⁸⁴ From Hobbes to Hutcheson, one can see a history of the ideality of the empirical. As concepts of moral philosophy, the eighteenth-century concepts of sympathy and fellow feeling are founded on this idealization.

Critical of Locke’s view that desire was primarily a present uneasiness and essentially self-interested, Hutcheson took from him not only the unassailable immunity of simple ideas, but also his immense difficulties over the proper status and power of custom.⁸⁵ Far from disabling the untouchable ideal of

sympathy as a moral sense, custom is part of the economy that sustains this idealization. In his *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), Hutcheson tries to circumvent "the Power of Custom" by arguing that the individual has the same relation to custom as simple ideas have to the individual. Just as we cannot alter, invent, or change simple ideas, custom cannot alter, invent, or change the moral sense. "Custom," Hutcheson writes, "can never give us any idea of a Sense different from those we had antecedent to it." Custom is no more than a weak repetition of what is already there: "It only gives a Disposition to the Mind or Body more easily to perform those Actions which have been frequently repeated; but never leads us to apprehend them under any other View, than what we were capable of apprehending them under at first; nor gives us any new Power of Perception about them."⁸⁶ In relation to custom, the individual takes on the untouchable immunity of the simple idea. It is a testament to Hutcheson's struggle to make Locke's philosophy "moral" that he has at once to make the morality of the individual untouchable and to accept that the individual can only be moral if he or she has been *touched* by simple ideas formed by the impression on the senses of external objects and the power of custom.

For Locke, custom is the uninvited guest that can never be turned away. Custom describes an inexhaustible force: it touches everything. Our prejudices and partialities are "fastened by degrees" through repetition and habit until they are "riveted there by long Custom and Education beyond all possibility of being pull'd out again." After Locke, it is no longer nature, but custom that touches everything.⁸⁷ This leaves morality, and what would later be called the moral or sympathetic imagination, in an irresolvable dilemma or unavoidable suspension. On the one hand, we should be able to find a balance between what Locke calls the internal ought of morality and ideas of "*moral Rectitude*" governed by the "Law of Fashion." Modelled on the *epideictic*, the classical rhetorical form of praise and blame, Locke argues that the law of fashion provides a "common *measure*" for ideas of moral conduct through the powerful need for "public Esteem" and reputation.⁸⁸ On the other hand, the greatest source of ignorance and error is the ubiquitous and unavoidable experience of "*giving up our Assent to the common received Opinions, either of our Friends or Party; Neighbourhood, or Country.*"⁸⁹

Faced with the unreliable inheritance of the law of fashion as both the guarantee and the perversion of moral conduct, Hutcheson turned to the natural moral sense or involuntary sympathy as the untouchable standard of morality in a world dominated by the forces of custom and habit. However, he also defines the moral individual almost entirely on the basis of the habits and customs of society. We feel for others because we see how people customarily treat each other in society. There is a natural correspondence between the "*Publick Sense*" of the individual, he insists, and the "strong Ties of Friendship, Acquaintance, Neighbourhood, Partnership; which are exceedingly necessary to the Order and Happiness of Human Society."⁹⁰

Custom touches everything and is touched by everything, while the sympathetic moral sense is founded on the presumption that it touches everything without itself being touched. It touches everything because it remains untouchable. Both of these propositions—*x* is untouchable, *y* touches everything—are idealizations, and both were precarious propositions in the eighteenth century, not least because the cohesive totality of “custom” or “sympathy” only needed a public exception to challenge its *imperium*. For Edmund Burke, for example, this public exception took place in Versailles in October 1789.⁹¹

One could also argue that Hutcheson started his work on sympathy with a public exception. He begins with the challenges presented by Mandeville. In *Observations on the Fable of the Bees* (1726), Hutcheson attempted to outmaneuver Mandeville by arguing that private virtue can produce general wealth. It is “still possible,” he writes, “without any vice, by an honest care of families, relations, or some worthy persons in distress, to make the greatest consumption.”⁹² It is in reaction to the possibility that private vices might produce public benefits that Hutcheson turns to an untouchable sympathetic moral sense that remains above and beyond any private interests and finds a general, even universal, concept of a public interest that touches everything by never being touched. As the possibility of sympathetic fellow feeling, the moral sense is a necessary or pure absence that sustains the tenuous presence of an idealized morality.

Despite his refutation of Mandeville, Hutcheson remained preoccupied with the instability of this most public of public concepts.⁹³ The ubiquitous customary practice of sympathy can never extricate itself entirely from the general power of custom. Sympathy can never resist being touched by custom, as experience is integral to its very possibility. As the untouchable foundation of a morality that must be touched and touch everyone, sympathy is impossible.⁹⁴ If we can mistakenly approve of objects of wealth, if we can transfer moral qualities to the objects of society, how can we trust that a society of sympathetic spectators will provide a general standard, a rule, for moral conduct? Hutcheson described the products of this unavoidable intimacy between sympathy and custom as the “Phantoms of Virtue.”⁹⁵ At the same time, these phantoms are unavoidable and always necessary. Like “custom,” sympathy touches everything. And like “sympathy,” custom is untouchable and inescapable.

VI. A NECESSARY OR PURE ABSENCE

In a footnote to *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), Hume gives way to a rare moment of self-evident assertion, though the very addition of a footnote displays a certain anxiety over what is “needless” to say and “sufficient” to conclude. He writes: “It is needless to push our researchers so far as to ask, why we have humanity or fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient, that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature.”⁹⁶ In

his influential attempt to assert a self-evident secular concept of sympathy, entirely denuded of its religious and political heritage, Hume had famously written in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40): “No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than the propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own.”⁹⁷ While this can be read as a simple affirmation of the general power of sympathy, it can also be seen as Hume’s more nuanced recognition of the inherent problem with a concept of sympathy or fellow feeling in relation to experience.

Hume addresses this problem by later arguing that the individual has the capacity for a “*limited generosity*” or “*confin’d benevolence*.”⁹⁸ Feelings of generosity are determined by geography, habit, and custom: strongest with family, slightly less forceful with friends, and weakest of all with strangers.⁹⁹ An “*extensive sympathy*,” or that “*principle, which takes us so far out of ourselves, as to give us the same pleasure or uneasiness in characters which are useful or pernicious to society, as if they had a tendency to our own advantage or loss,*” Hume suggests, would require the ideal coincidence of three factors.¹⁰⁰ First, an imaginative sympathy that was focused enough to enter “*into sentiments, which no way belong to us.*” Second, for an individual, who has his or her own “*peculiar position with regard to others,*” to take on a more circumspect and “*general*” point of view that “*over-look[s]*” his or her own interests. Finally, that the individual form “*some general inalterable standard*” for sympathy as a public concept through the complex variety and “*perpetual contradictions*” of society.¹⁰¹

For a concept of sympathy as an untouchable ideal or pure possibility that touches everything and reaches everywhere, Hume implies, the particular focus of the imagination would have to be in harmony with an almost rational appreciation of a general perspective that could see *through* the inconsistency and lack of uniformity in society. Hume does not say this is impossible, but much of his philosophy puts such a perfect balancing act in question, as does his turn to custom as “*the great guide of human life.*” Custom, which never ceases to put us in search of sympathy, which never stops leaving us trying to make up for a lack of complete sympathy, is uniquely indispensable. With Hume, custom takes on the ubiquitous idealization that Hutcheson attempted to give to the moral sense. In contrast to sympathy, “*it is that principle alone which renders our experience useful to us*” (my emphasis). Without custom there would simply be no future: “*we should be entirely ignorant of every matter of fact beyond what is immediately present to the memory and senses.*”¹⁰²

As we have seen, for Smith sympathy denotes “*our fellow feeling with any passion whatever.*” This comprehensive definition evokes the tradition of the natural law of sociality and reflects more contemporary debates over the utility of *sociabilitas*.¹⁰³ It may also contain a lingering echo of Hobbes’s recognition

of a Puritan and Parliamentary claim to an exclusive fellow feeling. Smith founds his theory of moral sentiments on the sense of propriety and the passions that are consistent with propriety. As a form of propriety, the moral sentiments are judged through the criteria of merit and demerit, duty, utility, and virtue. The self-evident presence of propriety is a sign of the necessary absence of a complete and direct sympathy. Hume had argued that the feelings of others “appear first in *our* minds as mere ideas,” and Smith in turn accepted that “we have no immediate experience of what other men feel.”¹⁰⁴ For Smith, sympathy relies on a virtual or ideal presence through the powers of our minds, our ideas, and our imagination. As he observed in his essay on the history of astronomy, when discontinuities arise from experience and present the understanding with “something like a gap or interval,” the imagination then “endeavours to find out something which may fill the gap, which, like a bridge, may so far at least unite those seemingly disjointed objects, so as to render the passage of the thought betwixt them smooth, and natural, and easy.”¹⁰⁵

Smith places this necessary absence—which is both a possibility and limitation of being touched—within the framework of “a realistic account of moral sentiments” that attempts to balance the interest in others and self-interest within a moderate but productive commercial society.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, Smith remains faithful to the idealization of custom and sympathy that shapes the eighteenth century. His concept of custom transcends the irregularity of its “particular usages” and, touching everything, reinforces “the general style of character and behaviour.”¹⁰⁷ At the same time, Smith suggests that sympathy is untouchable because, ultimately, it cannot be touched by my imagination and experience—the only tools that I have to bridge the gap between another and myself. Sympathy allows me to be touched “entirely” by another because it alone remains untouchable:

Though sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize. . . . My grief, therefore, is entirely upon your account, and not in the least upon my own. It is not, therefore, in the least selfish. How can that be regarded as a selfish passion, which does not arise even from the imagination of any thing that has befallen, or that relates to myself, in my own proper person and character, but which is entirely occupied about what relates to you?¹⁰⁸

VII. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF SYMPATHY

From Hutcheson in the 1720s to Wordsworth in the 1790s, there is an incessant call for sympathy to be at the heart of morality and an unending confession of the insufficiency of sympathy. This continual need to imagine, idealize, and describe what is lacking suggests that we need to re-examine the eighteenth

century as a century in *search of* sympathy. As a hypothesis, one could suggest that the eighteenth century begins with an incessant call for a full and complete sympathy that is already absent or already required to be an untouchable and pure possibility. The emphasis on sensibility, sentiment, sympathy, and the sentimental, on the excesses of crying and of highly wrought nerves on edge and a self-evident fellow feeling, marks not the beginning but the end of an ideal. The eighteenth century might even be described as a century of extended mourning for the loss of fellow feeling. The nineteenth century then reluctantly recognized this absence. The rejection of sympathy or empathy in the twentieth century is perhaps not so much a move away from a vitally present culture, as an almost impossible struggle to negate the powerful and persistent absence of sympathy.

After Locke and certainly after Hutcheson, writers throughout the eighteenth century never stop marking the limits, the excesses and absences of sympathy. There is *never really enough* sympathy. There is *always just too much* sympathy. No one is really being touched enough; no one is really, absolutely, untouched. Sympathy is always insufficient. This is not a profound insight of recent criticism—it merely repeats the economy of sympathy that existed in the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁹ It was this perpetual insufficiency that made sympathy so interesting in the eighteenth century, and it has certainly sustained most of the scholarship on sympathy in the last fifty years. A meta-discourse on sympathy still eludes us.

It is possible that “sympathy” registers something that resists writing on or about sympathy from “somewhere else.” As McGann suggested, to enter into discourses of sympathy in the eighteenth century, one must already begin to sympathize with sympathy.¹¹⁰ And if we cannot not begin by going “inside,” how do we stand “outside” of sympathy in the eighteenth century when it appears to be a remarkable idealization (the untouchable—that touches everything) which is constantly criticizing its own shortcomings?

Can one ever actually stand “outside” of sympathy? What is beyond “sympathy” in the eighteenth century? Perhaps just another powerful idealization—such as “reason”—that has anticipated its own failings, that remains always to be called for in its absence and leaves the eighteenth century as a century confronted by its own irrationality. Or, from our vantage point, perhaps this becomes a theological argument between the “soul” of sympathy and its critics, the soul (*psukhē*) that we can never stop trying to touch, once and for all. The “atheist”—someone who believes that antipathy is stronger than sympathy or that the anaesthetic is possible—will say that there never was and never will be a soul of sympathy. They will then replace the empty space of the “soul” of sympathy with a pervasive ideology or dominant public norm and then argue that this soulless soul has the power of “sympathy,” has the power to touch everything. If not sympathy, what else? As an idealization that is constantly marking its own absence and, at the same time, anticipating announcements of

its premature demise, sympathy continues to resist its critics. As the judicious narrator of *The History of Tom Jones* (1749) observes:

In the next place, we must admonish thee, my worthy friend, (for perhaps, thy heart may be better than thy head) not to condemn a character as a bad one, because it is not perfectly a good one. If thou dost delight in these models of perfection, there are books enow written to gratify thy taste; but as we have not, in the course of our conversation, ever happened to met with such a person, we have not chosen to introduce any such here.¹¹¹

NOTES

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1. William Wordsworth, "Essay on Morals," *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1974), I:103.

2. See Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (London, 1978), 25, 71; and Walter Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre?," *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1985), 147–54, 150, and "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, 253–64, 256. See also Giuseppe Nori, "The Problematics of Sympathy and Romantic Historicism," *Studies in Romanticism* 34, no. 1 (1995): 3–28.

3. Walter Jackson Bate, *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth Century England* (New York, 1946), 129–59; Northrop Frye, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," *ELH* 23 (1956): 144–52, repr. *Eighteenth-Century English Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. James L. Clifford (New York, 1959), 311–18. See also R. F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (London, 1974); Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London, 1986); and Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London, 1993).

4. G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 1992), 2.

5. For example, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1794), Mary Wollstonecraft warns that "We ought beware of confounding mechanical instinctive sensations with emotions that reason deepens, and justly terms the feelings of humanity. This word discriminates the active exertions of virtue from the vague declamations of sensibility" (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, A Vindication of the Rights of Men, An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, ed. Janet Todd [Oxford, 1999], 1–62, 54).

6. On Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the "economy of pity," see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, 1976), 171–92.

7. John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1990), 1–17, 34. See also Mark Sabler Phillips, *Society and Sentiment* (Princeton, 2000).

8. See, for example, Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge, 2004).

9. Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford, 1996), 3.

10. McGann, 7–8, 49. See also Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston, 1988).

11. Aristotle, "On the Soul," *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans.

J. A. Smith, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1984), 641–92, II:421a. Greek text: Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. W. S. Hett (Cambridge, Mass., 1986),

12. Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, 1992), 747.

13. McGann, 4.

14. Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford, 2005), 18; Aristotle, II:424a.

15. Aristotle, II:414a, II:415b.

16. See Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. (Lincoln, 1989), 138.

17. Derrida, *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*, trans. Marian Hobson (Chicago, 2003). See also Derrida, "Parergon," *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago, 1987), 15–47, 20–21.

18. Derrida, *Husserl's Origin of Geometry*, 132–33.

19. Aristotle, II:423b.

20. Derrida, *On Touching*, 6.

21. Derrida, *On Touching* 34.

22. Derrida, *On Touching*, 6, 295–96.

23. R. S. Crane, "Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,'" *ELH* 1, no. 3 (1934): 205–30, 206–7. See also Syndy McMillen Conger, "Introduction," *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics: Essays in Honour of Jean H. Hagstrum*, ed. Conger (Cranbury, 1990), 13–19.

24. Crane, 230.

25. Crane, 207.

26. Crane, 207.

27. Donald Greene, "Latitudinarianism and Sensibility: The Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling': Reconsidered," *Modern Philology* 75 (1977): 159–83.

28. Greene, 176–80. See also G. R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought within the Church of England 1600–1700* (Cambridge, 1950).

29. See Crane, 209; and Greene, 165–69.

30. Greene, 173–76.

31. Greene, 180.

32. Greene notes (159, 181) that Crane's hypothesis has been broadly accepted by both Martin C. Battestin (*The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts* [Oxford, 1974], 223, 257) and Brissenden (27–28). **Claude Rawson had also challenged Battestin's work at this time in "Order and Misrule: Eighteenth Century Literature in the 1970s" (ELH 42 [1975]: 486–90).**

33. G. S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Towards Defining the Origins of Sensibility," *Studies in the Eighteenth Century III: Papers Presented at the Third David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra 1973*, ed. Brissenden and J. C. Eade (Canberra, 1976), 137–58.

34. G. S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres," 139–40.

35. G. S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres," 140–41.

36. G. S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres," 141n8.

37. G. S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres," 142n10.

38. On the reaction to René Descartes, see Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001).

39. G. S. Rousseau, "Introduction," *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture and Sensibility* (New York, 2004), 157–59, 159. See also Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason: How the Enlightenment Transformed the Way We See Our Bodies and Souls*, foreword Simon Schama (London, 2003); and Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2008).

40. G. S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres," 144, 155–57.

41. G. S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres," 145–49.
42. David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals" [1751], *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principle of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1994), 169–284, 260.
43. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge, 2002), 13.
44. See Richard Burgess Barlow, *Citizenship and Conscience: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Religious Toleration in England During the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1962), 60–62. See also Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke, eds., *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford, 1991).
45. Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty?: England 1689–1727* (Oxford, 2004), 9, 2–3.
46. See, for example, *Milton and Toleration*, ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (Cambridge, 2007), and Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006).
47. John Locke, *Epistola de Toleration / A Letter on Toleration* [1685], ed. and trans. Raymond Klibansky and J. W. Gough (Oxford, 1968), 71, 69. See also John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge, 2006).
48. Locke, *A Letter on Toleration*, 59–61, 78–79. Locke later writes: "No security or peace, much less friendship [*amicitia*] can ever be established or preserved amongst men, if the opinion prevails that dominion is founded in grace and that religion is to be propagated by force of arms" (84–85). See also Cicero, *On Duties*, ed. M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins (Cambridge, 1991), I:50.
49. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan; or, The Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civill* [1651], ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge, 1996), 43.
50. John Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces: Conservatives and Radicals in the English Civil War* (London, 1980), 89–92.
51. Donald R. Kelly, "Elizabethan Political Thought," *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500–1800*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock, Gordon J. Schochet, and Lois G. Schworer (Cambridge, 1993), 47–49, 49. The *OED* cites the earliest example of "fellow feeling" in Robert Cawdry's *A Table Alphabetical* from 1613, though an earlier edition of the same work in the Bodleian can be dated to 1604.
52. See John Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, trans. Thomas Norton, Reinolde Wolfe, and Richarde Harison (London, 1561), 85. See also Andrew Pettegree, "The Spread of Calvin's Thought," *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKin (Cambridge, 2004), 207–224, 210; Guenther H. Haas, "Calvin's Ethics," *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, 93–105, 94–95, 102–3; Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge, 1987), 2, 158; Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding Their Peace* (London, 1998), 112–28; and John F. H. New, *Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of their Opposition* (London, 1964), 40–45.
53. See William Pierce, ed., *The Marprelate Tracts 1588, 1589* (London, 1911). See also Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Levell Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, 2002), 505–20.
54. Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988), 84.
55. John Udall, *Obedience to the Gospell. Two sermons conteining fruteful matter, both of doctrine and exhortation* (London, 1584), 15–16. See also Claire Cross, "John Udall," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford, 2004), 55:849–50; and Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625* (Oxford, 1982), 264–65.
56. William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine: or the description of theologie containing the order of the causes of salvation and damnation* (Cambridge, 1600), 505. See also Perkins, *A commentarie or exposition, upon the true first chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Cambridge, 1604), 463, 651. On Perkins, see Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and*

Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War (Cambridge, 1992). See also Lake, "Calvinism and the English Church," *Past and Present* 114 (1987): 32–76; and John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford, 1991).

57. George Abbot, *An exposition upon the prophet Jonah contained in certaine sermons* (London, 1600), 204, 143, 445. See also Paul A. Welsby, *George Abbot: The Unwanted Archbishop 1562–1633* (London, 1962).

58. Lancelot Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine at large, or, a learned and pious exposition of the Ten Commandments* [1626] (London, 1650), 491. See P. E. McCullough, ed., *Lancelot Andrewes: Selected Sermons and Lectures* (Oxford, 2005).

59. See Edmund Calamy, *England's looking-glasse presented in a sermon to the Honourable House of Commons at their late feast, 22 December 1641* (London, 1642). See also Sir Henry Vane, *Two Speeches Spoken at a common hall October 27 1643* (London, 1643), 14. The title of a pamphlet from October 1642 perhaps best captures all the militant rhetoric of fellow feeling: *The Scots Remonstrance, declaring their fellow-feeling of the distractions and distempers of the kingdome, with their resolution to petition His majesty for an accommodation with His parliament, and if that be rejected, by force of Arms to assist the Parliament to bring the delinquents and disturbers of the State to condigne punishment*. This is a title of what appears to be a missing work quoted in Robert Rich, *Joyfull Newes from the Earle of Warwick, being a true relation of the taking of two Ships that came from Denmark; with The Scots Remonstrance, declaring their fellow-feeling of the distractions and distempers of the kingdome* (London, 1642).

60. It is hardly surprising that what appears to be John Milton's only use of fellow feeling is found in the midst of the Commonwealth years in a letter written on behalf of Cromwell. Milton's letter from 1655 reiterates the continuing legacy of the Puritan and Parliamentary claims to a language of international fellow feeling. Responding to an edict from the Duke of Savoy demanding that his Protestant subjects convert to Catholicism, Milton writes: "What fellow-feeling of the Calamities of Brethren pierc'd your breasts, we readily conjecture from the depth of our own Sorrow, which certainly is most Heavy and Afflictive" (*Letters of State written by Mr. John Milton* [London, 1694], 146).

61. See Cragg, *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution 1660–1688* (Cambridge, 1957), and Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1978). On the Royalist evocations of sympathy from the margins of the 1650s, see Victoria Kahn, "Reinventing Romance, or the Surprising Effects of Sympathy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 (2002): 625–61.

62. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* [1678], ed. W. R. Owens (Oxford, 2003), 10–11.

63. John Dryden, "Absalom and Achitophel" [1681], *The Major Works*, ed. Keith Walker (Oxford, 1987), 193, ll 607–9.

64. Perkins, *A godly and learned exposition or commentarie vpon the three first chapters of the Revelation* (London, 1606), 37. See also William Burton, *An exposition of the Lords Prayer* (London, 1594), 86.

65. See, for example, Sir Roger L'Estrange, *Fables of Aesop and other eminent mythologies, with moral and reflections* (London, 1672), 468; Thomas Sprat, *A Sermon preach'd to the nation of the county of Dorset residing in and about the cities of London and Westminster, December 8 1692* (London, 1693), 19; and William Baron, *A just defence of the royal Martyr, K. Charles* (London, 1699), 139.

66. John Hughes, *The Spectator* No. 302 (Friday, February 15, 1712), Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1965), 3:79–81.

67. Hughes, *The Spectator* No. 375 (Saturday, May 10, 1712), 3:409–13.

68. Thomas N. McGeary, "John Hughes," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 28:658–60. See also William Duncombe, "An Account of the Life and Writings of John Hughes," *Poems on Several Occasions with some Select Essays in Prose* by John Hughes, 2 vols. (London, 1735), I:i–xxxviii; and Samuel Johnson, "John Hughes," *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations on their Works*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford, 2006), 3:39–42.

69. Hughes, "The Ecstasy," *Poems on Several Occasions*, 2:299–300.
70. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 189–91.
71. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 142.
72. Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (London, 1714), 39. The phrase "Pity no Virtue, and why" only appears as a subtitle in the first edition of 1714.
73. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* [1788], *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge, 1999), 141.
74. James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson* [1791], ed. R. W. Chapman, intro. Pat Rogers (Oxford, 1998), 712 (25 March 1776). See also Boswell, 309 (20 July 1763).
75. Mandeville [1714], 40.
76. This is perhaps more evident in the expanded second (1723) and third editions (1728). See Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: Or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, ed. F. B. Kaye, 2 vols. (Indianapolis, 1988), I:254–56, 260, 333; II:7, 11–12, 20, 41, 118, 120.
77. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue; in two Treatises: I. Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design. II. Concerning Moral Good and Evil*, 4th ed. (London, 1738), 239–40.
78. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, "A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm to My Lord ****" [1708], *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge, 1999), 4–28, 10. See also John Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford, 2003).
79. Shaftesbury, 10–11.
80. Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections. with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* [1742], ed. Paul McReynolds (Gainesville, 1969), 4. See also *Inquiry*, 116.
81. Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 134–35, 144.
82. See Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, 1996).
83. See Richard Tuck, "The Civil Religion of Thomas Hobbes," *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Nicholas Philipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 1993), 120–138, 138. This is perhaps most apparent when Hobbes argues that sovereign authority has a unique relation to equity (131, 187–91, 237–38).
84. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [1690], ed. and intro. Nidditch (Oxford, 1979), 106, 118–19, 163, 373, 564–65.
85. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 250–51, 258, 277. On Hutcheson and Locke, see Daniela Gobetti, *Private and Public Individuals, Households, and Body Politic in Locke and Hutcheson* (New York, 1992); Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, "A Mind for Passion: Locke and Hutcheson on Desire," *Politics and the Passions 1500–1850*, ed. Kahn (Princeton, 2006), 131–50; and Daniel Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond* (Cambridge, 2006), 150–87.
86. Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 84–85.
87. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 712, 82. See also James Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge, 1993), 189, 199, 224.
88. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 352, 357, 354. See Locke's quotations from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* and the *Phillipics*, 355–56. See also Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England: 1500–1700* (New York, 1961); and John O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome* (North Carolina, 1979).
89. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 718.
90. Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 222.
91. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in certain Societies in London relative to that Event. In a Letter intended to have been sent to a Gentleman in Paris* [1790], ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (London, 1986), 171.

92. Hutcheson, *Thoughts on Laughter and Observation on 'The Fable of the Bees' in Six Letters* [1726], intro. John Price Valdimir (Bristol, 1989), 93–94, 98.
93. Hutcheson, *Thoughts on Laughter*, 80, 100.
94. Hutcheson, *Thoughts on Laughter*, 61, 66.
95. Hutcheson, *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions*, 95, 99.
96. Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 219n1.
97. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* [1739–40], ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford, 2001), 206.
98. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 317, 318.
99. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 314, 384.
100. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 374, 370.
101. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 376, 371–72, 384–85.
102. Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 44.
103. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 13. See also Smith, *Theory*, 372; Cicero, I:11–12, 22, 49–56; Samuel Pufendorf, *On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law* [1673], ed. James Tully, trans. Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge, 1991), I:3.7–9; Hutcheson, "On the Natural Sociability of Mankind" [1730], *Logic, Metaphysics, and the Natural Sociability of Mankind*, ed. James Moore and Michael Silverthorne (Indianapolis, 2006), 189–216; and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* [1755], in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, 1997), 126–27.
104. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 319; Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 11.
105. Smith, "The History of Astronomy" [1795], *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, ed. W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce (Oxford, 1980), 3–42, 42.
106. See Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, "Needs and Justice in the Wealth of Nations," *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation State in Historical Perspective* by Hont (Cambridge, 2005), 389–443, 401. See also Nicholas Phillipson, "Adam Smith as Civic Moralizer," *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Hont and Ignatieff (Cambridge, 1983), 179–202.
107. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 227, 244.
108. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 374.
109. See, for example, Michelle Levy, "The Wordsworths, the Greens, and the Limits of Sympathy," *Studies in Romanticism* 42, no. 4 (2003): 541–63.
110. McGann, 4.
111. Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones* [1748], ed. R. P. C. Mutter (London, 1985), 426.