

Letter V

On the Origins of Moral Ideas

It seems to me, my dear C***, that the preachers of virtue (Rousseau excepted) rarely seek to unearth the origins of moral ideas. Yet it is through this inquiry alone that we may come to understand the intimate ties that exist between those ideas and our conscience and between the feelings we experience when we act according to them and our happiness.¹ It follows that although the immediate influence of vice and virtue on our well-being has been praised often and eloquently, it has not sufficiently been argued that the principles of virtue and the personal happiness they procure are a necessary consequence of our moral constitution, and that the need to be virtuous is practically irresistible for those who are ruled by wise laws and raised without prejudices.

Because witnessing the pleasure of others, or even the idea of someone else's pleasure naturally satisfies us, it necessarily follows that we experience pleasure when we are the cause of it in another. It is stronger than the sort of pleasure we cause in others because it is more thoughtful and deliberate, and because it is anticipated, which

1. "Moral" is contrasted with "physical;" "moral ideas" are ideas about society. But as Grouchy notes, there is an intimate connection between such ideas and morality.

always increases the mind's activity. If we get more pleasure from contributing to others' happiness than we do from witnessing it, then that pleasure must be greater still when we relieve someone of their trouble. Such pleasure is enjoyed more thoughtfully and is always accompanied by the pleasant sensation of being delivered from the idea of pain. The enjoyment of performing a good deed is increased by this also: knowing that we owe the pleasure that follows from it to our own agency, that we have, consequently, the power to secure it for ourselves and to replicate it at will. For although possession may sometimes make something that was once pleasing no longer attractive to us, it is more striking still that in a simple and natural life, possession increases something's value—for it brings together the present and the future, the current pleasures and those derived from reliable expectations.

Performing good deeds, therefore, naturally brings us pleasure. But another sentiment is born out of that pleasure: the satisfaction of having done good. This is similar to the way physical pain, as well as a local and present impression, creates a painful impression throughout our body. We find, therefore, a personal pleasure in the memory of somebody else's happiness. But in order for this memory to be often present in our minds, it must be tied to our existence, to our thought processes, and this is what happens when we are the cause of another's happiness. Then, that memory becomes part of our intimate conception of ourselves; and like that conception, it becomes a habit, and it produces in us a pleasant feeling which reaches much further than the specific pleasure that instigated it. So when we bring others a positive benefit, the pleasure we experience as a result does not depend on the nature of the pleasures they receive. But when we free someone from suffering, our pleasure, like theirs, being born out of the cessation of pain, it is even more natural that the memory we retain of it should not preserve the detail, or even the nature of the actual suffering.

Therefore, the pleasure of performing good deeds is joined by the longlasting satisfaction of having done so, a sentiment which then becomes, in some ways, general and abstract, as it is felt anew when we remember good deeds without our having to recall their particular circumstances. We have already discussed, in the first letter, this sentiment which is the most general principle of the metaphysics of the soul, just as the theory of abstract ideas is the most general principle of the metaphysics of the mind.² It is still the sweetest of all our sensations, that which is most similar to our moral affections, which draws the mind and delights it without pressing upon it the insatiable and voracious activity of the passions. It is the only one capable of making up for all the torments humankind is susceptible to, the only one that is always under our power, never cheating our desires but always answering them, always soothing and filling the heart, and being an insoluble tie between us and others. Happy, my dear C***, is he who always carries this sentiment deep in his soul, and dies feeling it still! Only he has truly lived!

If the sight or the idea of someone else's unhappiness gives rise in us to painful feelings, these feelings are sharper still when we are the voluntary, or even the involuntary, cause of this unhappiness. If the manner of our causing this unhappiness is completely involuntary—that is, if it cannot be attributed to our intention, thoughtlessness or carelessness—then the intensity of our painful emotion is due to its being closely tied to our memory, is more immediate, and is harder to dismiss. If by our thoughtlessness or carelessness we cause unhappiness to anybody, we will feel a greater pain because it will be linked to the idea that we could have prevented it.

An idea of this sort produces in us a very painful feeling, indeed, by contrasting the state we are in through our fault and that in which

2. Here Grouchy draws a contrast between the soul (realm of feelings) and mind (realm of ideas), which is derived from Locke but also Condillac.

we could otherwise have been. The thought that we could be better off makes that painful feeling stronger, for the same reason that we feel evil more strongly when it follows goodness, or that a possible good, when the imagination pictures it vividly, can be the object of regret just as much as a real one would. The fear of causing the same evil again is added to that painful feeling, producing a painful sensation that brings about the resolution to avoid any occasion that might lead to it, and is thus the inspiration for prudence. When we have done evil voluntarily, all these causes come to be, and more strongly so; and they are joined by a particular pain, that of feeling toward ourselves the unpleasant sentiment others experience at the sight of one who has hurt others.

Just as knowing that we have done something good becomes tied to our existence and makes it more pleasurable, the consciousness that we have caused some harm troubles our existence by causing us to experience feelings of regret and remorse that are upsetting, distressful, disturbing, and painful, even when the painful memory of the harm we caused is no longer distinct in our minds.³

Fear of remorse is enough to keep all men away from evil, either because all are at least a little acquainted with remorse, even for a small misdeed, or because imagination alone suffices to give an idea of the torments that result from remorse even to a person who has only ever done good—if indeed such a person even existed! The satisfaction that comes with good deeds and the terror of the memory of bad ones are both efficacious causes of behavior.⁴ Both are universal sentiments, and they are part of the principles and grounds of human morality.

You will now easily understand, my dear C***, as I have set out the origin and nature of these sentiments, and bearing in mind what

3. See *TMS* II.2.4, p. 81.

4. See *TMS* I.3.3.8, p. 65.

you have read in the preceding letters about particular sympathy and the effects of enthusiasm on the force of habit, that they can become active, are permanent, and acquire, depending on the circumstances, a determining strength, even an irresistible force. Thus, for example, remorse for a bad deed, or even the fear of such remorse, will increase when we think of its duration, as the imagination paints a picture of the misfortunes it will generate throughout our lives. This faculty is one of the most deadly enemies of man's peace because, more insatiable than the heart, it renders him incapable of enjoyment, always carrying his thoughts beyond his possessions and capacities. But it is also one of the most efficacious causes of his happiness, as it draws to his attention the effects of vice and virtue, reminds him that he has the power to benefit and harm others, and that at the same time he can always carry within himself a sense of happiness, thus making a great part of his happiness independent of fate and helping him face death and bear all life's miseries.

Here, my dear C***, we have a distinction, already established through sentiment alone, between our actions. Some come with a pleasurable feeling and the mind is satisfied by them, while others come with pain and are followed by a sentiment that is always unpleasant, and often painful also.

But the more lasting sentiment of satisfaction or pain, which comes with the memory of the good or bad we have done to others, is necessarily altered by reflection. And it is those adjustments that lead us to the idea of moral good and evil, this first and eternal rule with its judgment which is prior to that of human laws, a rule that very few laws have sanctioned or developed, but that so many have violated, and that prejudices have stifled, and in such absurd manner! When, for instance, we give a person pleasure that will last but a short time, and will have no influence on the rest of their life, if our motivation is not that of particular sympathy, then we will receive less satisfaction than we would had we given that person pleasure that

was also a lasting benefit. Perhaps we will repent, even, for having left that person in the grip of real hardship, when we only offered them temporary help, and instead of satisfaction, we will feel remorse. Here we see, therefore, the beginning of a distinction between the good deeds we do through luck and those we do through reflection, the good we are drawn to do by a particular sympathy and that we do from general sympathy.⁵ When we follow a particular sympathy, we obey, in doing so, the instinct of our hearts. But if we act out of general sympathy, when we are indifferent among several possible good deeds, or cannot decide between one inspired by our inclination and another, greater deed toward which we are not inclined, we weigh the benefits to others and we choose according to that which will bring us, if not the greatest present pleasure, the more lasting satisfaction.⁶

From this point, our actions, which were before simply beneficial and humane, acquire moral goodness and beauty, and from this is born the idea of virtue—that is, *of actions that give others pleasure in a way that is sanctioned by reason.*⁷

5. Smith grounds this in resentment; Grouchy's is a much more Hobbesian moral psychology (because of the important of pleasures and pains in her account).

6. These seem like utilitarian calculations and a case can be made for describing Grouchy as a sympathetic consequentialist (see introduction, this volume). At the time she was working on the *Letters*, Grouchy was corresponding with her friend Etienne Dumont, who was working with Jeremy Bentham in London, translating his work into French. Their surviving letters show that they exchanged books and ideas, and that Grouchy had a strong interest in Bentham's work.

7. Emphasis in the original. This is reminiscent of Kant's claim in the *Anthropology: (Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell [Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996], 7: 266, 173–174).

The ambition of a person may always be an inclination whose direction is sanctioned by reason; but the ambitious person desires, nevertheless, to be loved by others also; he needs pleasant relations with others, maintenance of his assets, and so forth. But if he is, however, passionately ambitious, then he is blind to those other purposes that his inclinations also offer to him. Consequently he ignores completely that he is hated by others or that he runs the risk of impoverishing himself through his extravagant expenses. This is foolishness (making one's partial purpose the whole of one's purpose) which even in its formal principle smacks reason right in the face.

The idea of a distinction between the moral and physical harm inflicted on someone is more difficult to grasp, but no less precise. When it happens that a small harm done to one individual would prevent a greater harm done to another, or an equal harm to many others, then if we do not inflict this small harm, we will be afflicted by the remorse of not having prevented the greater harm much more than we would have allowed had we inflicted the smaller harm. By contrast, the regret of having inflicted the lesser harm will be softened by the stronger satisfaction of having prevented the more serious harm. The same is true in relation to any pleasure we may derive from harming someone else: such pleasure will be weak and will not compensate us for the remorse that comes with inflicting this harm. In all those circumstances, we become used to consulting our reason as to what the best course of action is, and we settle on the one that will give us the greatest satisfaction afterwards, and thus we acquire the idea of moral evil—that is, of *an act that is harmful to others and which is prohibited by reason*.⁸

This definition strikes me as more accurate than the one proposed by Vauvenargues, who says that moral good and evil refer to whatever is more useful or harmful to humanity in general.⁹ These two definitions are fundamentally the same, as any good or evil that reason approves or disapproves of corresponds to that which is useful or harmful to humanity. But Vauvenargues's definition is less precise and harder to grasp because it does not take into account the idea that moral good and evil can be found even in the common man.

8. Emphasis in the original. This definition moves Grouchy further from utilitarianism, in that evil is not simply defined as "an act that brings pain." In particular, it seems that for her what reason sanctions is treating people equally and what she prohibits is treating them unequally.

9. Bernier and Dawson cite Vauvenargues's *Réflexions et Maximes* (1746): "Afin qu'une chose soit regardée comme un bien par toute la société, il faut qu'elle tende à l'avantage de toute la société, et afin qu'on la regarde comme un mal, il faut qu'elle tende à sa ruine: voilà le grand caractère du bien et du mal moral" (Bernier and Dawson, *Lettres sur la Sympathie*, 74n50). For more on Grouchy's point, see the introduction, this volume.

For ordinary reason and conscience are not enough to understand good and evil from a universal perspective. Yet it matters more than is sometimes thought, in defining moral concepts, that we should prefer those definitions that the least enlightened of men may grasp. For when it comes to uncovering the general laws ruling the human heart, the most reliable and enlightened reason is that which is the most common.

Once the idea of moral good and evil is acquired, we become quite used to distinguishing the one from the other; we can tell how doing something or, on the contrary, refraining from doing it will lead to pleasure or pain, satisfaction and remorse, without having to weigh or calculate the consequences of doing so.¹⁰ The idea of goodness promises a private satisfaction, and the idea of evil tells us that remorse will follow, precisely because the very idea of pleasure or pain can produce a pleasing or painful sentiment, now or in the future. This is similar, in some respect, to that practice in the sciences of relying on certain methods and principles as being correct, without having to remember the evidence we have received that they are. In the same way, we obey general sentiments without thinking back to the way in which they were first formed and all that justified them.¹¹

In that way also, in order to feel remorse for the harm and satisfaction for the good we have done, we do not need to retrace the consequences of those deeds in our imagination. We may no longer even have the general memory of having done something good or bad but, rather, a more abstract sentiment of good or evil doing. It may be that other sentiments come into play, depending on the

10. This is again suggestive that Grouchy adopted a form of consequentialism. See the introduction, this volume, for a discussion of her position.

11. Smith uses the language of general rules rather than general sentiments; Grouchy's analogy is novel, however.

circumstances, but they are not necessary for our conscience to act on our soul and determine, cast judgment on, or reward our actions. However, such feelings tend more often to strengthen the moral sentiment rather than weaken it. Our remorse for the harm we have caused and our satisfaction for the good we did increase, for instance, according to whether the signs of pain or pleasure they have caused are more expressive or moving, is more capable of impressing our imagination and, through it, of speaking to our conscience. Souls that are easily moved more often act on such feelings, whereas those whose sensibility is deeper and more reasoned usually act according to those more abstract and general sentiments that accompany good and evil. The former, when they do good, do so more freely, whereas the latter acts in a more orderly fashion and with more attention to justice. The former derive a stronger pleasure from it, but the latter offers a pleasure that is more influenced by reason, but also is more often mixed with a measure of self-esteem. The former have a tendency to act rashly and blindly, the latter to neglect the good because of a stubborn determination to seek the best. One could wish for the former to be more common among the large number of men who have only superiors or equals, and the former among the class—too prevalent—of those who rule and govern because of either a legitimate right or a secret power.

The greater ability for experiencing abstract and general feelings—that is, feelings that are only the consciousness of what several individual feelings have in common, like the greater ability for forming abstract and general ideas—is the greatest distinction of hearts and minds. Only those hearts capable of such feelings are truly just, for it is only those that are capable of being ruled by immutable principles. Only on the sensibility of such hearts can we rely, as they are always susceptible to being moved by general motives. Their conscience is silenced with difficulty—and it is always active. Remorse is in them less fallible and more efficacious, with all the ideas of its duties more

complete. Such people especially know to fulfill these delicate duties of honesty that morality alone imposes and recognizes, and which always bring regret and the loss of feelings of happiness when they are forgotten, and display those disinterested virtues that are the fruit of a sublime need to have always the greatest and most satisfying idea of oneself.¹²

Forgetting those abstract and general sentiments, or being incapable of having them, brings about a kind of egoism, which then smothers these sentiments completely. For indeed, the culpable and mean habit of relating all objects first to oneself, and of judging them essentially from that perspective, little by little weakens the sentiments associated with good and evil. Egoism is thus insufficiently punished when it is judged to be less dangerous and blameworthy than passions, which are more harmful in appearance, such as hatred, vengeance, and even envy. These passions are nearly always short-lived; they are rare and only ruinous to very few men, while egoism smears and tortures entire classes. Laws nearly always repress the excesses of these other passions, but egoism is as yet only weakly condemned and weakly punished by morality and opinion. Finally, these passions, it is true, do sometimes result in violent actions. If egoism does not result in such violence, it is nearly always because of the fear of being on the receiving end of the same violence. On the other hand, it will lead to all sorts of hidden injustices or oppression.¹³ If these other passions make men more fearsome, egoism makes them more corrupt, because it leaves virtue no other motivation than self-esteem and offers no restraint than others' respect, an ineffectual barrier in the face of the manipulations of cunning.

12. This is a very Smithian idea: "It is a stronger love, a more powerful affection, which generally takes place upon such occasions; the love of what is honourable and noble, of the grandeur, and dignity, and superiority of our own characters" (*TMS* III.3.4, p. 158).

13. This is interesting in connection to what she says about property rights in Letter VI.

Minds that have neither strength nor breadth enough to reach general and abstract ideas, to grasp and combine their components, will never achieve great results nor, consequently, add new truths to the sphere of knowledge—and sometimes they cannot even comprehend those truths that result from calculations or extended comparisons.¹⁴ Thus it would be in vain to attempt to convince those who cannot grasp such ideas to adopt opinions derived from them. Concerned only with trivial and isolated matters, particular and insular opinions, such a person will qualify as dangerous any system that he cannot understand, and, with his false prudence constituted as pride, he will scornfully shut himself inside his errors.

There is a scale of sorts concerning the ability to grasp abstract and general ideas, against which all minds can be measured according to their place and their relationships to each other. Those who, through reflection or a kind of instinct, have acquired the habit of always extending or generalizing their ideas never stop doing so. Those for whom this need to acquire more and greater ideas has been prevented or stifled by other passions (as is the case for most people) ordinarily remain at the same level on the scale, and they no longer, as it were, change their ideas. This is the reason why it is so difficult to enlighten men, even concerning their own true interests.¹⁵ First, one must look for some force in their passions that is capable of renewing and extending their intelligence, which is weakened by inaction or degraded by falsehood. Then, we must make them embrace the

14. By contrast, Smith insisted that many innovations could be the product of efforts to save time by ordinary workers, even child laborers (see Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, in *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, ed. R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1981), 1.1.8, pp. 20–21).

15. This seems to be underlined by a theory of adaptive preferences of the kind Condorcet put forward in his paper for granting women rights of the city, and by Mary Wollstonecraft (*A Vindication of the Rights of Men, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Janet Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)).

truth, either by presenting it in clever and dazzling forms that make it seductive or by captivating their reason slowly, using a logic so steady that the last step toward the conclusion is no more difficult to take than the first.

It is therefore desirable that one of the main objects of education be to provide some ease in acquiring general ideas and in experiencing those abstract and general sentiments I was telling you about.¹⁶ But common educational practices are ordinarily very far from fulfilling this goal. The study of grammar, which comes before all others, it is true begins (when children understand it) to give a few notions of metaphysics, but the most false or at least the most incoherent ones. They then study languages by mechanically translating authors whose thoughts they rarely comprehend. The study of history nearly always comes next, but without mention of those great results that alone can make it useful, as otherwise it would be too easy for them to recognize these abuses they are taught to respect. They are brought up amid all the prejudices of pride and vanity, and these deprive them of the sentiments of those inalienable rights common to all men, of real happiness and real merit, and give them instead the notion of artificial pleasures and superiority, which, when they are desired or respected, make their mind smaller, corrupt their reason, and extinguish their conscience. Any morals they are taught nearly always consist in a few isolated precepts in no particular order, with the most insignificant duties mixed with the most sacred ones, presented in the same way and given the same importance. Only rarely does this instruction cause them to look into their own heart and to seek

16. Note that the discussion of the failings of the educational system is a summary of the debates on the reform of education that started before the Revolution and that was taken up first by Talleyrand and later by Condorcet; but is also very close to Wollstonecraft's (*Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* [London: J. Johnson, 1787]), which it is possible Grouchy had just read, as she alludes in a letter to Dumont to a book he sent her by an English female philosopher on that very subject, and which she greatly admired.

there those eternal and general laws that distinguish good from evil, and to listen to sentiments that praise the one and punish the other. Scientific studies are nearly always abandoned at the point where the mind, already accustomed to content itself with vague ideas and to prefer to deal with words than with the world, finds it hard to follow their methodical reasoning, is wearied even by the most obvious ones, and grasps with difficulty their general principles or is incapable of deriving new conclusions from them.

Let us therefore, my dear C***, stop reproaching nature for the lack of great men; let us not be surprised that we should know so little of the general laws of nature. How many times in one century does education succeed in giving a mind the necessary strength and rectitude to form abstract ideas? How many times has it succeeded in perfecting the mind's instinct for truth or has strengthened its propensity to pursue the truth and nothing else, to be always nourished by it? How often, on the contrary, does it not lead us astray, toward trivial and common opinions, from prejudice to prejudice, from error to error? How often, for instance, has it distorted our need to live only for useful, true, and great pleasures toward which nature directs our mind and our heart, toward the need to live only for deceitful pleasures restricted to self-love and vanity? Eh! How many virtues, talents, and lights has this mistake alone stolen from us, and each day still steals from humankind?

Letter VI

The Same Subject Continued

You saw, my dear C***, that when we harm or benefit others, we experience sentiments that, joined with reflection, give us the abstract idea of moral good and evil. This idea gives birth to that of justice and injustice. And that idea differs from the first only in the following way: reason's endorsement of a just action must be guided by the idea of right—that is, a preference ordered by reason itself in favor of a person and because of which we must prefer that person's interest even when particular circumstances may make it seem weaker than somebody else's interest. Thus, a man who, in the state of nature, has taken pains to cultivate a field, to supervise its harvest, has a right to this harvest. That is, reason demands that it be his because he bought it through his labor, because by taking it away from him, and making his work useless, depriving him of what he had long looked forward to and of the possession he deserved, we hurt it more than we would if we were to deprive him of a similar harvest that just happened to be within his reach. Reason demands that we give him preference even when he does not need all his harvest while another has a real need of some harvest—and this is precisely what constitutes right. It is grounded in reason, on the necessity of general laws to rule over actions, common to all men, and makes it unnecessary for

us to examine the motives and consequences of each particular act. It is also grounded in sentiment, for since the effect of injustice is more harmful for its victim than just the effects of mere harm, it must inspire in us a greater repugnance.

You might find it hard to accept at first glance, my dear C***, that in the state of nature, the man I mentioned just now, whose harvest was bigger than what he needed for his subsistence, should not be compelled by his neighbor—without its being unjust—to share the excess with a third person who did not have enough to see to his own needs. If you think about it, you will see that this man's right to his harvest comes from his labor, not his needs, and that this right came into being through the work itself, and that even if his humanity must lead him to renounce it, reason will not allow someone else to compel him to do so. You will see also that this man, if he refuses to share his returns with the poor, commits a lesser crime than the powerful neighbor who would use force to make him act benevolently. The first lacks humanity, the second violates one of the general laws that reason dictates and causes men to respect, showing that they serve the common interest, and that the good that comes from breaking those laws in a few rare particular circumstances cannot be compared to the advantages produced by their generality and inevitability.¹ If, driven by absolute necessity,² he who violates the right of another solely in order to satisfy this immediate need may be morally excused, this does not entail the general negation of this strict right. If it ceases to exist in this hypothetical absolute necessity, it is because, then, he

1. Although here the requirement that we should show humanity to each other seems to fade in comparison with that of respecting rights derived from reason, Grouchy believes that the former is just as important as the latter. See Letter V.

2. "Absolute necessity" refers to circumstances (famine) when property rights can be infringed legitimately. On some of the history of the so-called right of necessity, see, for example, John Salter, "Grotius and Pufendorf on the Right of Necessity," *History of Political Thought* 26, no. 2 (2005): 285–302.

who refuses the necessary subsistence is an enemy, attacking in a way the life of the person he will not help.

Perhaps this definition of *right* seems incomplete to you, as the word *preference* appears contrary to *natural equality*, which is the foundation for part of men's true rights. But this is not a real contradiction; for when equality is harmed and we must give preference to the person who is suffering because of it, we are only preferring the recovery of equality over a superiority that reason does not recognize. Thus the right that we have over everything that allows us to reach equality is justice, not indulgence.

A right such as property right is positive: it consists in a preference grounded in reason for the enjoyment of a particular thing. A right such as liberty is in some ways negative. It only exists because of the possibility that it might be in someone's interest to threaten my liberty. In this case, it would be reasonable to defer to that person's interest—my own in preserving it—because there are no reasons why this person should hold over me a power I do not hold over him. The same is true concerning equality. If another claims a preference over me that is not grounded in reason, reason demands that I should give preference to my interest in maintaining that equality rather than give preference to his claim. This is because submitting to another's will and being inferior in any respect is a greater evil than subjugating another's will and achieving superiority is a good. The idea of moral good and evil requires us to submit the natural sentiment of sympathy to reason so that it is directed towards the more pressing interests. The ideas of justice and injustice require that we submit to reason, which is itself led by general rules, by a preference grounded in general and reasoned concerns that aim at the greatest good—that is, in a preference for rights.

Don't you see, my dear C***, that if we appeal to this precise definition of "rights," the monstrous structure of the so-called rights of the despot, the aristocrat, and the priest, and all those whose power

is unsanctioned will simply collapse? These are prerogatives, which even though they banished liberty and equality from our midst, many nations, through ignorance and weakness, still describe as rights! As if reason could approve of leaving a sovereign (who may sometimes be a tyrant) unchecked, except by his remorse, the progress of the enlightenment, or the despair of his victims?³ As if reason allowed that the merit of fathers was anything more than a prejudice in favor of children! As if it authorized a religious leader (should a true religion exist) to possess oppressive riches, and to let intolerance be the result of his ministry! Last, as if it could allow that any power originally established for the interest of those submitted to it should become a source of tyrannical privileges and impunity for its custodians! How did it come to be, however, that the sacred title of right, which has been used everywhere to hide and disguise the power of might, became a mask inscrutable for the multitude, in spite of the fact that it is in their interest to tear it off? For a long time, no doubt, those governing men calculated that they could easily master the people by keeping their reason oppressed under the weight of need; that they could enchain the great by giving them the people, and entertain their vanity with rattles;⁴ and that all they had to fear was, from the former, excessive misery, and from the latter, general enlightenment.

An action that conforms to right is just; one that is contrary to right is unjust.

Just as an evil is greater if it is more unexpected, the painful sentiment brought on by injustice is stronger than that which an equal harm that was not an injustice would bring.⁵ The strength of this

3. This is an example of the republican thought of Grouchy: she insists that what makes monarchy unacceptable is not that a particular king is bad but, rather, that he could become so, and that subjects have no way of safeguarding their freedom from the ruler's arbitrary will.

4. Grouchy uses this same image in the "Reflections on the King's Letter," published anonymously in *Le Républicain* in the summer of 1793.

5. Smith makes a similar point about the Calas case (*TMS* III.2.12, p. 140).

sentiment is increased yet by personal interest, because as each person has rights, he cannot see the rights of others violated without feeling keenly the idea that his own rights might be violated. Moreover, injustice supposes, on the part of the person committing it, either fraud or violence; and it alerts us to the presence of an enemy to be feared by all. It also produces in us an unpleasant sentiment of mistrust and fear.

The sentiment that leads us to be just is stronger than that which moves us to do good, because it comes together with the fear of a more violent remorse; but the satisfaction we derive from having acted justly may be weaker than that we derive from having directly benefited someone. The former is grounded, like the latter, on sympathy and is therefore in itself just as powerful; but its nature seems of a different kind—more serene, less active, and less enjoyable.

From the idea of rights and justice is born the idea of our obligations to others.

We are obliged to do voluntarily all that another could expect of us independently of our will, without harming our rights; such is the strict sense of obligation that is limited to the objects of an absolutely strict justice. But when we talk of the acts that we could be obliged to do by another, without violating our own rights, we are not talking of a real or physical possibility but, rather, an ideal one. So, for instance, we can say of a judge that he is obliged to judge according to what he believes to have been proven, even though it is not physically possible to force him to do so.

Our actions therefore, my dear C***, are subject to two rules, reason and justice, the latter being nothing but reason reduced to one absolute rule. We have already found, in the private satisfaction of having benefited someone, and in the remorse of having harmed them, some very powerful internal reasons for obeying these two rules. But there is yet another reason: the pleasure immediately inherent in following reason and fulfilling an obligation. I am quite

certain that the existence of such sentiments is independent of the opinions of others.⁶

The first of these two sentiments would appear to have the same source as the pleasure born out of feeling our own strength. Indeed, we experience a satisfying feeling when we follow our reason, because we tell ourselves that were we to be led toward some evil by an unreasonable impulse, we could rely on our reason to correct that impulse and to avoid that evil. The greater part of what I have said (in Letter IV) relating to the pleasure of exercising our faculties, is even more completely suited here, as reason is among our faculties one of the greatest, the most useful and important. Is there a more reassuring and sweeter sentiment than that of knowing, through our very experience, that we possess such a guide, such a guardian of our happiness, securing our peace of mind! The pleasure we derive from following our reason is also made of the sentiment of our freedom, and of a sort of independence and our superiority to certain things that could potentially harm us. Thus it reassures us, and raises us in our own esteem, and satisfies the natural leaning for depending only on our own selves, a leaning that originates in the greater certainty we have of our well-being when it is in our own hands.⁷

The pleasure we find in fulfilling an obligation is closer to that of reassurance, the sweet sensation of being protected from resentment, vengeance, and hatred. The particular satisfaction that comes when we avoid a regret that would have haunted us is increased with the hope of never being subject to remorse, a delightful hope that banishes the idea of any intrinsic obstacle to our happiness.

6. Smith (e.g., *TMS* III.2.3, p. 114) wished to make the judgments of the impartial spectator within independent of the opinions of others and to be grounded in the love of praiseworthiness.

7. Here the appeal to self-sufficiency may be another trace of the Stoics' influence on Grouchy's thought. But it is also a feminist theme of the late eighteenth century, with Wollstonecraft's praise of independence, material, social, political, and above all intellectual.

We have reasons, therefore, not just to do something good for others but also to prefer good deeds over bad ones, and even just ones over unjust ones. These reasons are based on our natural sympathy, which itself is a consequence of our sensitivity. Until now, these reasons have not been influenced by any consideration tied to a foreign object. The morality of our actions, the idea of justice, the desire to follow it are the necessary work of sensitivity and reason. Any reasonable and sensitive being will have, regarding this, the same ideas. The limits of those ideas will be the same; they can, therefore, become the objects of exact science, as they are constant. Indeed, we can use the word *just* to mean anything we like, but any one who can reason well will have a common notion of justice.⁸ Moral ideas are not arbitrary, hence their definitions can only be so insofar as they are not presented clearly or generally enough.

It was necessary to establish the first grounds, to show that our moral sentiments originated in natural and unthinking sympathy for others' suffering, that our moral thoughts originated in reflection.⁹ It had to be shown, especially that assenting to a moral truth differs from assenting to a mathematical or physical truth, in that what naturally follows from such assent is a desire to behave in conformity with it, to see others do the same, fear of not conforming to it, and regret not having done so. We cannot say, however, that morality is

8. A "common notion" is a technical term in Stoicism taken up in the natural law tradition. It means, then, something that has a kind of axiomatic status that is widely accepted. It was given prominence in the eighteenth century by Leibniz's *Meditations on the Common Notion of Justice* (1704). But it is possible that all Grouchy here means to be saying is that with fairly minimal cognitive competence, one can have understanding of the common concept of justice.

9. The distinction between natural and moral sentiments is also very important to Smith's philosophy, but Grouchy's claim here is distinctive. On Smith's use, see María Alejandra Carrasco, "Adam Smith's Reconstruction of Practical Reason," *Review of Metaphysics* 58, no. 1 (2004): 81–116; and Eric Schliesser, "Reading Adam Smith after Darwin: On the Evolution of Propensities, Institutions, and Sentiments," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 77, no. 1 (2011): 14–22.

grounded in sentiment alone, as it is reason that teaches us what is just and unjust. But it is even less arguable that it be grounded solely in reason, as reason's judgment is nearly always preceded by and followed by a sentiment that asserts and ratifies it.¹⁰ And it is even originally from sentiment that reason acquires moral ideas and derives principles.

Smith, recognizing that reason is incontestably the source of general ideas and morality,¹¹ but nonetheless finding it impossible to deduce from it the first principles of justice and injustice, concludes that these first impressions are the fruit of an immediate sentiment, and he claims that our knowledge of justice and injustice, of virtue and vice, derives in part from whether they agree with a sort of intimate sense that he assumes without defining. However, this intimate sense is not one of those first causes the existence of which we can only recognize but never explain. It is nothing but the effect of sympathy, to which we are prone because of our sensibility. I discussed the various phenomena of this sympathy, which has become a general sentiment to be awoken by the abstract ideas of good and evil and must which consequently always accompany our judgments on the morality of actions. Let us beware, my dear C***, of this dangerous tendency to posit an "internal sense," a faculty, a principle, every time we come across a fact we cannot yet explain;¹² of this philosophy that, too careless with evidence, rejects ignorance and doubt, prefers imagination when observation suffices, invents causes when it cannot discover them, and not only pulls us away from the truth but also weakens the understanding. It is this philosophy alone that created these systems, either insufficient or false in their principles, which,

10. Here she uses "grounded" not as a justificatory source but more as a psychological pull.

11. cf. Smith (*TMS* VII.3.2.7, p. 320), where Smith talks of reason as the source of the "general rules of morality."

12. Smith makes a similar criticism of Hutcheson at *TMS* VII.3.3.8, pp. 322–323.

aiming to explain beyond what can be known or what can only be revealed in the term of several centuries, have disfigured or weakened the power of those most useful and sacred moral truths by mixing them up with monstrous fables.¹³

It is not necessary, therefore, to look outside nature, and always far from it, for reasons to be a good person, reasons that tend to be as incomprehensible as they are independent from our direct or indirect interest. The human moral constitution is neither evil nor corrupt,¹⁴ nor even indifferent, because it carries within itself a general reason for doing good and no reasons for doing evil.

But is that reason sufficient? This question, the most important concerning morality, deserves to be discussed carefully, especially as so far it has been broached only lightly and partially, either because those who did so wanted it answered negatively, so as to substitute morality's natural arguments, the imaginary grounds more favorable to their private interests, or because it has never been considered in isolation from the current state of civilization, calculating what it might become but, on the contrary, taking it as a constant given, or as a state nearly impossible to perfect.¹⁵

In order to find out whether the fear of feeling remorse for an injustice sufficiently balances out the interest one might have in committing it, one must examine this interest and what causes it. For if

13. This is an interesting claim about the significance of history, especially in the light of the fact that Grouchy relies on history much less than does Smith or Rousseau.

14. A clear rejection of the doctrine of original sin. The whole paragraph is an attack on religious authority when it comes to virtue.

15. Bernier and Dawson note here that this letter owes much to Condorcet's last work, the *Sketch of Human Progress*, and in particular its last part where he discusses the possibility of the future progress of human civilizations (Bernier and Dawson, *Lettres sur la Sympathie*, 85n58). However it might be more accurate to note in this case that the letter anticipates the *Sketch*, and that perhaps it even influenced it. Although many of Condorcet's notes for that work predate his wife's writings, they worked on the final draft together and, indeed, she prepared the edition after his death, almost certainly contributing some passages of her own (see the introduction, this volume).

we were to find that it is less the result of nature than of a few social institutions, if the fact that there were too few reasons to abstain from unjust behavior was nearly entirely the result of these institutions, then one would have to try and reform them and cease to calumniate human nature.

If to the personal interest we have in being unjust we oppose a personal interest in being just, and if the greater preponderance of the first could be attributed to vicious institutions, and that without them the second were in general nearly always equal or superior to the first, the fact that our reasons to do good are insufficient would be only the consequence of our mistakes, and not of a naturally vicious disposition.

If, at last, it could be demonstrated that the influence of our reasons for practicing virtue and following justice, an influence that would be so easily strengthened and broadened by education, is on the contrary so often weakened and defeated by it, and that the prejudices and anti-sympathetic sentiments¹⁶ they create through habit become insurmountable obstacles, we could expect the following result. In people shaped and governed by reason, such sentiments would be efficacious in nearly all circumstances, and would only miss their mark in extremely rare cases, or in actions of little import. But we do not need, here, to prove that these reasons would always be sufficient, or that all men would infallibly be just if they had no others, but merely that they would be so more often. Indeed, the unnatural and artificial reasons for doing good in which some wish to ground morality nearly always miss their mark and are less capable, even, than those we are talking about to act with force and constancy, and in a sufficiently general manner so as to make them useful in all circumstances and sensible to all men. It is enough, therefore, to show that reason alone, united to sentiment, can lead to goodness through

16. “[L]es sentiments anti-sympathiques.”

more secure, kinder, and less complicated means, subject to fewer errors and dangers, and that these means, far from demanding we sacrifice or silence any of our faculties, instead bring our moral perfection out of our intellectual one.

Let us pause here a moment, my dear C***, and see how this faculty of experiencing pleasure or pain at the thought of someone else's pleasure or pain, which is perfected with and by reason, becoming greater through reflection and enthusiasm, not only becomes for us a fertile source of delightful or cruel sentiments but also guarantees a life that is always gentle and peaceful to him who, faithful to reason and sensibility, obeys the call to do good and act justly, while he who behaves in the opposite manner is condemned to a life always painful and restless.

The first, living amid the good he has done or with the hope that he might do, always lives with an intimate sentiment of peace and safety. He can be alone with himself without feeling empty or listless, because one of the most active streams of his thinking always belongs to virtue. He is of course liable to pain, but that pain can never penetrate the sanctuary of his conscience where lives an inexhaustible satisfaction, where he can rest without boredom and without being troubled by the storms of passions, which he purifies through these delicate and generous sentiments, adding to them a happiness that is independent even of their satisfaction. Life and all its disappointments, men and their weaknesses, cannot trouble nor embitter him. He is easily satisfied with life because it gives him joys always accessible to him, that cannot be withered by habit, and that even ungratefulness cannot entirely corrupt; and because he sees men less in relation to what they could be, or what it is permissible to expect of them, than in relation to the happiness he can offer them. Thus, in his relations with them he is neither fussy nor worried, and it is by making them happy that he too finds happiness. He finds it hard to believe that someone would want to harm him, and he never fears

that it should happen, and when someone does want to harm him and he is forced to acknowledge that they do, he is more saddened than he is angered. Except those for whom he has a particular sympathy, he cares little whose company he keeps, as there are unfortunates everywhere. Effortlessly (and nearly without merit) disinterested, he rarely fails to touch those he loves and to obtain from them the happiness he gives. But if that cannot happen, he is never subject to bitter regret, and he finds solace in and distraction from his sorrow in his enthusiasm for virtue.

How different the fate of he who resists his reason and sensitivity! He loses more happiness yet than he can take from others, always finding in the unpleasant feeling of his existence an insurmountable obstacle to his rest and always tormented by the need to run away from himself. The world looks to him empty and deserted because the circle of things that can distract him is small. In vain do passions momentarily trouble his disquiet. But they are not intoxicating enough to put his conscience to sleep. It is no longer in his power to make use of his faculties, and the happiness he could have drawn from this flees from that secret ill that troubles and imperiously dominates his soul. If he seeks men, he is soon brought back to that painful sentiment he sought to avoid, through his own inferiority in relation to them and by the mistrust inspired by that which he himself deserves. Far from seeing in his fellow man (as the good man did) someone who, independent of his will even, could bring about his happiness, he sees in him an enemy as soon as he thinks he is known to him, or he finds himself bound to all the calculations of concealment and trickery. He cannot peacefully enjoy the pleasure of being loved; never will he experience it, because he always feels like a usurper. Never confident of the feelings he inspires, he only expects from others the good he refuses them in proportion as he is able to cheat them. Trusting no one but himself, he cannot rest on a friend's shoulder and there enjoy peaceful and trusting leisure. For a

LETTER VI

rebel by nature, trust denies him peace, as well as the first component of any happy sentiment. Guiltier still, and more unfortunate, when tired of his own boredom and self-hatred, and too far from virtue to be enlightened or moved by it, he seeks, by dulling his reason and senses, to stifle any remorse that chanced to survive.

Letter VII

The Same Subject Continued

All impulses toward injustice can be traced to four principal motivations:

Love's passion, the only pleasure that cannot be bought and which, consequently, remains separate from the love of money. We will not call it here sensual pleasure, as this expression has unfortunately become associated among corrupted beings with the coarsest of traffics.

The enticement of money, either for the sake of satisfying one's needs or in order to acquire riches as a general means of enjoyment.

The desire for ambition, sometimes compounded with pecuniary interest.

Last, the incentive of self-love, or vanity, which is often the cause and the aim of the previous two.

Let us examine first, my dear C***, how the desire for money or for something that can be bought may lead to injustice. If that desire answers to a real need, the incentive can be strong, and a person who lacks for everything, it seems, will have few scruples in behaving unjustly, especially toward a rich man, if he can be sure of doing so with impunity. But is such pressing need—so strong that it can stifle

the voice of conscience and overcome it—common in societies ruled by reasonable laws?

Let us suppose that laws should no longer support wealth inequality; then, even if justice and humanity were to be satisfied, cupidity, which takes more time and effort to eradicate, may persist. However, is it not likely that the natural inequality caused by differences in behavior, degrees of intelligence, or the greater or lesser fecundity of families would result in the random distribution of three-quarters of resources and an equal distribution of the rest? Let us imagine, for instance, a country of six million families and a land income of twelve hundred million *livres*: each family would have two hundred *livres* in annuity from the land.¹ Even supposing that natural inequality absorbs three-quarters of that sum on behalf of the rich, wouldn't fifty *livres* remain for each family? Take a look at our peasantry, my dear C***, and ask yourself whether among those who have an income of fifty *livres*, how many are reduced to a pressing need. It is well known, on the contrary, that as soon as they own two or three acres of crop, they earn a reputation for being well-off, and the average worth of two or three acres of the best soil for wheat is around fifty *livres*.

You will be fully convinced that this hypothesis, the grounds for which are generally accepted, is not an exaggeration if you observe that among these six million families, there will be a large number who, because they engage in industrial or commercial pursuits, will have no interest in keeping their share of the land and might in some case divest themselves of it in order to pursue other activities or speculations more advantageously.²

1. Bernier and Dawson (*Lettres sur la Sympathies*) refer here to Condorcet's *Sketch* and to "Social Mathematics." It might be better to refer to his *Commerce des Blés*.

2. Empirically, this is a rejection of physiocracy influenced not only by Smith but also by Condorcet's erstwhile superior in the ministry of finances, Turgot.

The kind of pressing need that is nearly always stronger than fear of revenge or remorse can also occur in the working classes, either because of a want of wage or because of a temporary mismatch of wage with the necessities of life—most common among these people. For agriculture is, after all, the most productive of all professions for individuals, while for states, it is the unique source of real and lasting wealth.

But now we have conclusive evidence that lack of wages or insufficient wages were caused nearly entirely by prohibitive laws hampering commerce and industry.³ Those laws at the same time were harming the well-being of all by consolidating, little by little in the hands of a few, wealth that then became a means of oppression and that otherwise, through the free movement of interests, would have remained if not equal at least common to all. The unequal distribution of the tax burden at last overwhelmed the lower class who, with no property and no liberty, were reduced to rely on fraud and would cheat remorselessly because conscience cannot survive when it is in chains. The incentive to behave unjustly, when it is based on need, is therefore extremely rare in the absence of bad laws; even when they are present, this incentive is weak, its effects are the least widely spread, and it is to be feared the least.⁴

You will notice, my dear C***, that the incentive to behave unjustly for the sake of wealth acquisition presupposes the possibility that one might succeed. But this possibility is still, in many respects, a product of the law. Were the law clear, it would warn all equally; were it just, it would admit of no exception; were it exact, it would leave no opening for corruption and bad faith. Were civil administration

3. This is probably a reference to the ideas developed in Condorcet's *Commerce des Blés* (1776); see Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, *Reflections on the Formation and the Distribution of Riches*, trans. William J. Ashley (New York: Macmillan, 1898); and Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

4. These paragraphs comment show Grouchy to be a political economist and proto public-choice theorist.

everywhere not to interfere in so many activities that should be left to progress according to nature, it would not leave an opening for arbitrary power—less dangerous, perhaps, for its exercise than for all that is allowed for the sake of its gain and preservation. Finally, if laws alone ruled everywhere, if we feared them alone instead of also men and classes, then the only unjust way of acquiring more than we need would be through theft, in the real sense of the word.⁵ It is thus against the temptation to steal that we ought to measure the strength of the remorse that follows an injustice, and not against the temptation to commit those furtive injustices that are encouraged by age-old example and are almost authorized by the silence or, rather, the moral failure of laws. These laws, which ought to supplement citizens' conscience, are all too often oppressive chains instead. At best, they occasionally serve as the very last obstacle to wickedness. But supposing we had reasonable laws, the temptation to steal in order to increase one's pleasures would be much weakened by the inconvenience that acting on that temptation would cause, so that it would be in fact quite rare. Our conscience then need only resist minor thefts, which are proportionately less common and less powerful in their attraction.

Social institutions are even more to blame for the desire to act unjustly, which derives from vanity and ambition. They alone are responsible for the fact that man is dominated by man rather than by laws; that a great appointment is anything other than one which it is difficult to fill; that the personal reward for filling it is anything other than the honor of having done it well, or glory, if it is such as to allow for the display of great talents; that titles other than services rendered and public esteem are needed to obtain it; or that there are other means for achieving it than being judged worthy of it. It is those social institutions alone which for every class make it the case

5. Here Grouchy is talking of the rule of law.

that the road to fortune is one of intrigue and artfulness, conspiracy and corruption; they disconnect ambition from the love of glory, which would ennoble it and purify its ways.⁶ It is those social institutions, by sanctioning hereditary rights (nearly always first-generation abuses) that enable presumptuous mediocrity to rise, infallibly and tyrannically—for all such promotion becomes tyrannical if it is not established and limited by the general interest. If in all appointments one were bound by the law and forced to act according to it, if all appointments were granted by a general choice and a free election, our conscience would only rarely need to resist the sort of motivation that leads to crime or injustices inspired by ambition. Morality would no longer need to concern itself with that laxity of character and weakness of opinions, the art of courting vices and vanity, and all these corrupting means that are too often necessary for success and which intangibly undermine all the foundations of virtue.

The sort of vanity that is tied to nonpersonal qualities is obviously the work of bad social institutions, since it is only through such institutions that those qualities exist, having been adopted without good reason and always given in preference to local and particular interests over general ones. Meanwhile, pride derived from personal advantages can only become dangerous and lead to criminal acts when the general opinion, wrongly influenced by institutions, grants an exaggerated worth to frivolous traits. It is only in countries where there are courts, grandees, and ruinous fortunes, and where favor is the measure of preferment, that people are vain and passionate about their looks, as well as prone to jealousy and hatred because of them. And in such places, good looks can lead to anything, even sometimes to revolutions.⁷ And then, even

6. See *TMS* VII.2.4.9, p. 310.

7. This connects back to her early treatment of good looks and demagogues. (It's also a trope about Alcibiades, who was Socrates's lover.)

lower-class men, who cannot hope to achieve such brilliant success, admire and envy others their positions; they are excited by the tales they hear of them, just as in Rome the meanest soldiers who could not aspire to the honors of a Triumph came back from the celebrations drunk on the frenzy of conquest.

The same is true of vanity derived from wits and talent. It only becomes dangerous when the people, seduced by charlatans and hypocrites, grant them the esteem and rewards that by right belong only to real worth. But should all vicious institutions be abolished from one end of the earth to the other; should there be only necessary and reasonable laws; and should arbitrary power which, forcing its victims to destitution and servitude reduces them to ignorance and credulity, disappear for ever, human reason will emerge from its chains still healthy and vigorous, and will prevail in all classes and shape public opinion. No longer will fake talents seduce opinion and no longer will vices in disguise dare to show themselves at its tribunals. This bad faith and base jealousy—about which we asked if they could be countered by conscience—are not even aimed at achieving glory. True glory cannot be contested, and is only disputed in ways that are fit for obtaining it.⁸ Injustice can only take away the outward signs of glory. Therefore, when ambition and vanity put obstacles in the way of our conscience, the unique cause of this is the actual order of society wherever government is not grounded in the natural rights of men.⁹ But in a well-ordered society, conscience will nearly always suffice to repress these obstacles, as ambition and

8. On the significance of “true glory” in Rousseau and Smith, see Ryan Patrick Hanley, “Commerce and Corruption: Rousseau’s Diagnosis and Adam Smith’s Cure,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, no. 2 (2008): 137–158.

9. The (1789) French “Declaration of the Rights of Man” approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789, articulates a list of “natural, unalienable, and sacred rights.” Presumably Grouchy has in mind a similar list.

vanity—were they to acquire such strength—would be in agreement with reason and justice.¹⁰

It is again these vicious institutions that we must hold responsible for acts contrary to morals which are motivated by love.

We do not mean here by love this tender and deep sentiment, often generous and always delicate, whose first desire is always to love, its first ambition, the sweetness of being loved, its first care, the happiness and peace of its object; which attaches a greater prize to possession than to enjoyment, knows not how to pretend nor to cheat, wants to receive, give, and deserve only through the heart, and knows no pleasure except that which it itself chooses. Such passion is not common, because it supposes mutual sympathy, difficult to find and more difficult yet to recognize; a generous character; and a rare strength of sensitivity that is nearly always accompanied by some superior qualities. Such passion does not often lead to injustice, for such is its character and its course: it is a reciprocal devotion that inspires on both sides sacrifices, and yet it does not allow from either anything really harmful; it is an involuntary forgetting of oneself in order to be transported into the existence and happiness of the loved one. Such sentiments, lasting and fine, nearly always surmount their obstacles peacefully, and their generosity and disinterestedness ordinarily make them judge themselves as severely as conscience would.

Injustice, therefore, can only be motivated here by the desire to possess, or to have possessed this or that woman. Let us now separate from this desire whatever strength society has added to it by exciting pride and vanity through its vicious institutions. We will first see that the inequality created by laws,¹¹ and which will persist long after

10. A “well-ordered society” is the counterfactual institution in which preferences are properly cultivated and incentives are properly aligned toward virtue.

11. Smith thinks that inequality is the first cause of laws, but then the rich and powerful bend the laws in their own favor (*Wealth of Nations* 5.1.a.15, 697f.).

them, is alone responsible for the existence of an idle class for whom gallantry is an occupation, an amusement, and a game. This inequality alone is responsible for making it easy to sacrifice victims to such passion, and it makes it the instrument and accomplice of ambition and cupidity. Let us suppose next that this same inequality, and the laws made to sustain it, were no longer reducing most marriages to nothing but conventions and pacts between fortunes, so quickly concluded that it becomes apparent only long afterward whether personal preferences were met, and where the price of love is fixed at the same time as the dowry is calculated, without knowing if it is possible to love, and especially to love each other. Let us suppose at last that man would stop imposing on his fickle heart, and his will, which is even more changeable, indissoluble ties that are incompatible with his nature, whose flexibility and proud independence can only be fixed by a habitual sentiment of freedom. Let us suppose that divorce were to be allowed for all people. Let us suppose even that, as in Rome, for the sake of human weakness and the more lasting needs of one sex, it were possible to form temporary unions that the law would not repudiate but, rather, would set the conditions for.¹² From then on we will see that most unjust acts committed in the name of love (or, rather, the degradation of love) will no longer be called for. This passion will lose, through the ease of satisfaction, that dangerous strength it acquired from the obstacles it encountered. Too long has society prevented unions based on mutual taste and has set up walls between the two sexes (under the pretext of protecting virtue) such as made it nearly impossible for hearts and souls to come to know each other, as is necessary for the creation of virtuous and lasting unions. Too long has it excited and absorbed the vanity of men for the corruption of women; made it harder to experience pleasure together

12. Cf. Charles de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller, and Harold S. Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 430–431.

with feeling; and spread shame beyond what is really deserved, such as the uncertain estate of children, the violation of a formal promise, reviling indulgences, or an ease that indicates weakness and the lack of power over oneself. It is therefore society, through all these abuses, that gave birth to dangerous and corrupt passions that are not love and that made love such a rarity.

I have considered these passions here almost entirely in relation to men, but it would be easy to apply everything I said about men on this topic to women and to justify the opinion of a philosopher wiser even than he is famous: “The sins of women are the works of men, just as the vices of the people are the crime of their tyrants.”¹³

You have just seen, my dear C***, how the vices of social institutions are partly responsible for the growth of the various reasons we have to behave unjustly. But it is not only by giving more strength to these reasons that they weaken the power of our conscience to resist it; they also weaken it by habitually resisting it.¹⁴ Indeed, such reasons as we might have to act unjustly, empowered more yet by the faults of our social framework, have made man determined to do evil more often than his conscience has been able to prevent it. From then on, the influence of conscience is weakened either by habitual disregard for its warnings or by its habitual violation. For being habituated to evil, or habitually exposed to it, indirectly diminishes remorse and the fear of exposing oneself to it, except in the case of strong souls whose

13. This is a misquoted and out of context reference to Condorcet’s “Eloge d’Hunter,” in *Oeuvres Complètes de Condorcet*, ed. Sophie de Grouchy, Pierre George Cabanis, and Dominique Joseph Garat (Paris and Brunswick: Henrichs, 1804), Tome II, p. 443. In the context of Letter VII, it suggests that, like Mary Wollstonecraft, Grouchy believed that women’s moral failures were to be blamed on the fact that they were dominated by men and by bad laws and institutions. This is the only remark in the *Letters* that suggest an openly feminist agenda. (We thank Stefan Heßbrüggen for directing us to the source of this passage.)

14. There is a lot throughout the *Letters* on the role of habituation in morality. This suggests that Grouchy’s ethical theory was influenced at least in part by Aristotelian virtue ethics. On this, see Sandrine Bergès, *A Feminist Perspective on Virtue Ethics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 84–108.

vigorous sentiments of justice and goodness cannot be corrupted. I say that the habitual sight of evil diminishes remorse *indirectly* because we have a natural tendency to rid ourselves of any painful feeling; and a person tormented by remorse will strive to move away from all the ideas that keep that remorse alive, and to surround himself instead with all the objects that might lighten its weight. Vicious institutions now finish what they started, for they provide that person with the means of long deceiving his own heart. They even give him permission to look upon the evil of which they are the source and for which they then become the excuse, as inevitable, necessary, politically indifferent, or even useful. In any case, habit itself will dull any sentiment because pain, like pleasure (especially when they are not very lively), is always made greater through a comparison with a near and different state, and because the starting point of pain or pleasure is part of the intensity of the sentiment it gives us. The same is true of the man who is but the habitual witness of injustice. That injustice will grow less great in his eyes if he does not possess a strong spirit which would not lend itself to the excuses of vice, and this powerful and virile sensibility which cannot be misled nor corrupted, and which can sustain indignation for a long time without being too painfully fatigued.

As vice becomes more common, it achieves more brilliant, more visible, and greater success, and the hope of drawing from such success the means for more daring and greater projects yet excites a true interest in doing evil. The financial speculator¹⁵ who carries out a small fraud in order to gain fifty Louis, has in his sight the practiced Croesus who made millions from a similar deal. His cupidity is not

15. The *agioteurs*, or financial speculators, were much reviled during the period preceding the Revolution, and were blamed for the economic crash and the resulting famine. (Smith was also critical of such “projectors” and even proposed controls on finance to prevent their actions.)

limited to a few coins; grasping enthusiastically toward the time when he too will have piles of gold, his conscience is already corrupted.

The power, therefore, of an ordinary conscience together with reasonable laws would suffice for man to be just and good. But since social institutions have, in most countries, more often degraded nature than perfected it, and since he receives from them false and incomplete moral opinions, as well as passions more dangerous than the ones he has by nature, and since their effects destroy the justice and original strength of his conscience, in order to stay in the path of virtue, he needs that strength and powerful light that nature so rarely gives out, and that without it can only be acquired in deep and reflected meditation.

Letter VIII

You saw, my dear C*, how impulses toward injustice were magnified and multiplied by vicious institutions. Far from guarding man against his own weakness, often they would take advantage of it in order to corrupt him, choosing means most likely to seduce the minority that would benefit from such corruption, and that were most capable of subduing the majority that would suffer from it. Having obstructed men for centuries in the exercise of their natural rights, these institutions led them from adversity to stupid and credulous blindness, which caused them to accept, as a law of necessity, the chains they had become incapable of seeing or breaking. It will not be difficult to show that reasonable laws can both increase the personal desire to be just and strengthen the power of conscience, even toward such objects as governed and punished by conscience alone.

Actions contrary to justice fall under two categories. Some are real crimes punishable by law. Others, either because they are less significant or because they are more difficult to secure a conviction for, do not fall under the law. In all societies where crimes are punishable by laws, and the established sentences appear to be at least as strong as they need be to deter those from committing such crimes, the effect of such sentences is nonetheless incomplete, and people complain that the laws are not sufficient in themselves.

However, we have not paid sufficient attention to what a small number of philosophers have been saying in the last few years. I will not hesitate to repeat it here, for truths must be told not only until they are adopted by every enlightened person but also until all those who defend the abuses they proscribe are silenced. The prevention of crime is less the effect of the intensity of a sentence than of its certainty; and extreme severity almost always results in impunity. Indeed, a humane man will not denounce a servant who stole from him if the sentence awaiting that servant is death.¹ The same quality almost always prevents one from denouncing small thefts that, although less severely punished, are still disproportionately punished. If, on the contrary, minor crimes were punished only by corrective sentences informed by and essentially punished through public opinion,² and if for all ordinary offenses and the least wrongdoings we did not break in an instant all the ties that attached the offender to society (by taking his life or covering him with permanent disgrace)—that is, the last safeguard between him and a life of crime—then all would make it a duty, for the sake of common interest, to denounce criminals. We would be less indulgent, even, were it not for the fact that need reduces people to a dulled state that excuses their crimes.³ Criminal laws, through their severity, and civil laws, because they favor inequality, are therefore the cause of impunity for lesser crimes. And they can also be considered the cause of greater

1. Cf. *TMS* 2.2.3.10, p. 90.

2. Smith thought that for the working poor, the anonymity of urban life made this impractical (*Wealth of Nations* V.i.g.12, pp 795–796), and so required religious affiliation. But Grouchy anticipates Mill in embracing the “moral coercion of public opinion” to regulate social life. Cf. *On Liberty* I, in John Stuart Mill. *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 14.

3. By contrast, Smith thinks that repetitive labor created a dulled state (see the “torpor of mind,” *Wealth of Nations* V.i.f.50, p. 782) for which public education and enlightenment were an adequate response. If hunger and need reduce the cognitive ability presupposed in prudential and moral functioning, then the legislator who aims at virtue must ensure that people’s needs are met. This is another argument for Grouchy’s egalitarian tendencies.

crimes, since it is the impunity of the former that inspires the confidence needed to commit the latter.

In order for the fear of a sentence to be effective and beneficial, that sentence must not outrage. Its justice must be perceptible to average reason, and it must especially awaken the conscience at the same time as it punishes its silence and slumber. But this will not be so if sentences are too strong and, instead of inspiring horror against crime, appear barbarous and unjust themselves;⁴ if they do not punish the injustices committed by the rich against the poor; if, when these injustices are not subject to sentences, the laws do not prevent them in other ways; if a judge can arbitrarily harden or soften a sentence; if there are privileges, hereditary, personal, or local, that offer a legal loophole, direct or indirect. Then the people will be tempted to see criminal laws as made against them and in favor of the rich, as the result of an association designed to oppress them. Then they will hate more and they will fear these laws that no longer inform their conscience, because they outrage their reason and this hatred is enough to overcome fear in strong souls and in all those made bitter by the joint feeling of injustice and need.

The laws that favor inequality of fortunes, as well as all the disadvantages I have already pointed out to you, have the further disadvantage of multiplying those who have nothing to lose. A man of property not only feels more strongly the justice of respecting that which belongs to others but also is restrained by the fear of losing his own property, by that of retaliation, and by the necessity of repaying at least the value of what he has stolen. Hope of restitution increases the desire to prosecute him, so that he is more worried about exposing himself to the least suspicion, and having to pay for a difficult and expensive defense. Last, if the vices of social institutions did not leave

4. The barbarism of European legal practices echoes the great theme of Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments*.

the door open for the kind of rogueries that are difficult to prove, impossible to prosecute, and sometimes dangerous even to complain about, there would be fewer people reduced to straightforward theft. By preserving their natural rights, the social order would put men in the best position to bring about mutual respect, and those rights would then be guaranteed by each person's interest in their own happiness and tranquillity, even more than it would by the law.

You see therefore, my dear C***, that social institutions are still rather far from having achieved the degree of utility one could draw from criminal law. But for this to be the case, people must be able to see those in charge of the execution of the law, of arresting the guilty and condemning them, not as the masters of the law but only as its defenders and its friends.

Having thus described what criminal laws could achieve, philosophers took the liberty of attacking such laws that bring more abuse than benefits. This indictment, ordered by all those who were not accused, and justified by all too many injustices, nonetheless earned those who undertook it the name (truly more honorable than injurious) of dangerous *novatores*.⁵ But when they demanded laws from which the guilty could not escape, and from which the innocent should not fear, they were asking for just laws. When they demanded less severe laws, they demonstrated that severity could be as dangerous as it could be unjust. When they considered that reason and common utility were the natural and absolute judges of social institutions, it was because these were the only general and infallible rules.

We must therefore cease to slander philosophers, try and silence them, or maintain that the use of reason is dangerous and that reason approves of everything that is sanctioned by the past. Another reproach made to them, which is as serious in appearance as it is

5. In early modern philosophy, the *novatores* were those who offered new science as distinct from scholastic philosophy.

ridiculous in fact, is to claim that they wish to substitute the breaking wheel and the scaffold for the true grounds of morality, and especially for supernatural incentives for justice.⁶ Those who are accused of wanting to govern through such barbaric means (should we forget?) are the very same individuals who asked that laws be milder, so as to increase their irrevocability and efficacy, and who demanded that justice and reason alone determine which sentences are proportionate to which crimes. Cruel laws backed by supernatural incentives have failed until now to keep men from criminal activities.⁷ Given that, we cannot accuse of slandering human nature those who have said that milder and better organized laws, combining their strength with that of reason and conscience, would have more power to prevent crime. Are there any countries where better and more common use of supernatural incentives dispenses with punishment? Did history ever know a people who, governed by such motives, was neither barbaric nor corrupt? Let the apologists of such motives offer them as a great hope and consolation, sometimes sweet and sometimes useful, to the unfortunate man for whom the sentiment of his own virtue and courage cannot suffice;⁸ but let them no longer brag that they elevate human nature at the same time as they degrade it by offering it an artificial and imaginary greatness while reviling its greatest and most noble attributes, *reason* and *conscience*. Let them no longer accuse conscience of insufficiency while it is they who make it so by

6. The breaking wheel, also known as Catherine wheel was a torture practiced on thieves and highway robbers which consisted of breaking the limbs of the victim while they were tied on a slowly rowling cartwheel.

7. Theists often argued that theism was socially necessary because if supernatural incentives disappeared, people would not have an incentive to be moral or live according to the law. This is a debate associated with Bayle's interpretation of Spinoza (see also Voltaire's essay on atheism in John Morley, *The Works of Voltaire: A Contemporary Version*, trans. William F. Fleming (New York: E.R. DuMont, 1901), 3:109.

8. See *TMS* III.2.11, pp. 120–121.

establishing, on the ruins of reason, a foreign power that can only rule among their discord.

At this point, my dear C***, you might ask how we might motivate a man who has nothing to lose so as to respect others' property. This question need not be so difficult if we only think about it. First, considering an artisan or an established farmer who subsists only through his work, he will have a greater incentive to respect others' property either because, if not, he would soon cease to be employed or because, even though he has no reliable funds to ensure his subsistence, he nonetheless possesses some clothing, animals, food, and furniture, and the poorer he is, the more he will fear to lose these last resources. If he is affluent, the fear of being stolen from will be strengthened by greed, however. If he is indigent, it will correspond proportionately to his needs. Moreover, the general utility that leads one to respect others' property is noticeable as soon as all can hope to possess something (and as I demonstrated earlier, in a well-governed country, nearly all inhabitants would have some small property). For the worker who has nothing can hope to acquire, in his prime, what he will need in his old age for his subsistence. But the very instant he ceases to respect others' property, he loses this hope, which is so dear and necessary, yet often unacknowledged by those who have not witnessed closely the lives of those unfortunates, forced each day to check their needs against their strength, and who cannot imagine any other happiness than a life in which they do not have to work, or to have at least a life free of worry.

Supposing that thefts occur only regarding what is strictly necessary in order to preserve one's life when it is being threatened by absolute need; morality might look upon that with indulgence. But it will nonetheless be the least useful and the most dangerous solution, for as long as bad laws do not greatly increase needs and accidents, one will always benefit more from legitimate and peaceful solutions. Let us only remove the extreme inequality that puts the poor too far

from the rich to be known by them, and the rich too far from the poor to see them, and to let the voice of humanity reach their hearts; then unexpected misfortunes will become rarer and will certainly be mended. Take away from all the small tyrants their desolating scepter; make these heaps of gold disappear, the smallest and least illegitimate of which probably has, in secret, a thousand victims to its name; let man no longer be elevated above man in such a way that he no longer sees his duties next to his interest; and then theft and fraud will become rare enough that the greatest danger and most dreaded punishment will be their actions being made public.

Concerning unjust acts that do not fall under criminal law, we can observe that each person is keen to obtain the trust of others by achieving a reputation for probity and virtue. We prefer our farmer to be an honest man, our servant to be faithful; we prefer a craftsman who is known for his probity over one whose honesty is questionable. That this is not an efficient means of gaining trust in our societies is because a great portion of social advantages is acquired independently of general trust. This is because a large number of institutions that were established, apparently, for reasons of utility and have been preserved as if they were sacred prerogatives and properties, exempt civilized man from virtues that would be necessary even for a savage man who wished to live peacefully with his fellow men. It is because nearly everywhere, the prominence of vanity replaces the rights drawn from true merit and stifles the sentiment that accompanies it. It is because multiple obscure laws, rules, and so on make it impossible to recognize probity, or allow its reputation to be arrogated. It is because religious hypocrisy offers reliable means of gaining social advantages. It is because, under the cover of all abuses, a guilty and skillful prudence may obtain them, without even having to hide or pretend. It is because the extreme inequality of fortunes, and the great distance there is between one class and the other, renders men strangers to each other. Virtues cannot recognize each other unless

they be placed, by chance, at the same level. The powerful man and the worker in his employ are too far removed from each other to be able judge one another. And because their respective duties seem to get lost in the distance between them, the one may oppress the other nearly without remorse, while the other will in turn cheat him with impunity, even believing that he is in this way bringing justice to himself. The destitution of a large class of people, the sentiment of mistrust and cupidity that comes from it and leads them to cheat, makes it all the more impossible for them to be particular about the honesty of a man they buy from or sell to. Thus in all social relations, a large number of vicious institutions that, on the one hand, abused power and, on the other, took away natural rights have isolated men from each other, making probity and justice useless and alien to them by annihilating all their advantages and any reasons to act on them.

Thus, these institutions that were meant to complete human happiness have instead long degraded and corrupted it, perhaps because until now we had only sought to use them in order to perfect nature by forgetting nature itself.

Not only did the errors of social institutions make the accomplishment of the most sacred duties indifferent to men—and only granted the full strength of the desire to fulfill them to a small number of sensitive beings, who find a necessary happiness in doing so and whose attraction to virtue cannot be erased—but also, by creating artificial needs, these institutions weakened one of the most powerful motivations for an honest life: the enjoyment of domestic peace. There, by offering exaggerated rewards, which are unjust and intoxicating honors, these institutions excited self-love until it became a dominating passion—a passion capable of stifling the most powerful and the most delicate sentiments. Here they misled it, blinded it by attaching such value on places and fortunes of birth as belong only to great actions and virtues. In all classes and in all passions, these institutions added to the first and real existence of each person an

imaginary perceived existence, the needs of which were greater, more insatiable, and more inconstant, and whose pleasures were inevitably followed by disgust. A man shaped in this way could no longer be made happy or unhappy by need, by the good or bad use of his faculties, by whether or not he was in possession of their objects. No longer did he judge, act, or enjoy according to his own thoughts and sentiments. He is fettered by unjust laws, a child of fortune or drawn by her to all the abuses born of such laws, blinded and weakened by interest, nearly always in opposition to the voice of reason and humanity; he is able to satisfy his most audacious expectations, without needing to justify them through real merit, and his most corrupt passions, without being called to remorse by universal scorn. As soon as such a man could live above his needs, placed in the circle of vanity, the opinion of others, now the toy of the countless prejudices that were previously his obstacles, he becomes the measure of his conscience, the necessary sanction of his pleasures, and the first condition of his happiness.⁹

No doubt, my dear C***, this picture strikes you as an exaggeration. Devoted, without choice or effort, to your work and your affections, the habitual sentiment of reason and virtue, perhaps places you too far from men to perceive all their faults, or at least to recognize their deep roots. However, is there a society man who, looking at himself in good faith, will not find in himself the main outlines of that picture? Is there a man of the world (no matter how little invested he is in society) who in the choices he makes in his domestic and personal life, his fortune, pleasures, tastes, and even affections, is not led (by the indirect but nonetheless very real effect of our institutions)

9. Here Grouchy may be following Rousseau, who argued that luxuries corrupted the character. This claim is also made in French economic writings of the time (Condorcet and Turgot). However, we may also trace the plea for simple pleasures to the influence of ancient philosophers, such as Plato (*Gorgias*, *Republic*) or Marcus Aurelius.

to sacrifice to vanity that which was due to his true happiness? Where is he who, true to reason and nature, prefers the real pleasures to be found in peace and domestic virtue to those seductive pleasures of pride—that will, through habit, make us lose sight of our need, taste, or appreciation for other people? Where is he who is never carried away by all the inventions of idleness and corruption that relieve us of the weight of our own existence—a weight that soon becomes hard to bear when virtue is not part of the all-consuming charm of passions and to the arid pleasures of the intellect? Where is he, who always preserves part of his soul for the enjoyment of himself, in order to enjoy the sentiments of nature with all the indulgence and reflection they draw their sweetness and power from? Where is the man who, amid institutions, prejudices, and manners, the effect of which is to tie sensitivity to pride, still has a need for hidden and simple pleasure, for being secure at home in a reciprocal friendship, in the delicious peace of trust, goodwill, and unending indulgence, and who still finds some attraction in those sweet sentiments that passion and vanity scorn, but that nonetheless may be the frame of happiness, the only one that time does not use or let go? Where is he who, instead of seeking always far from nature a new way of enjoying or abusing of its gifts, finds each day a new pleasure in changing around him all the ties of duty and servitude into relations of charity, good faith, and kindness, and with his domestic gods creates a sanctuary where the happiness owed him forces him to partake with delight in his own existence? Private and comforting pleasures, entwined with peace and secret virtues! True and moving pleasures, never leaving the heart you once touched! You, that the tyrannical scepter of vanity always draws us away from, and that through its seductive magic we can no longer see except under the dark colors of duty, boredom, uniformity. . . Unhappy is he who disdains or abandons you! Unhappy, especially, the sex who one moment is gifted by nature with its brightest gifts, but for whom nature soon turns into a cruel mother. He

must not neglect or ignore you, for he will spend half his life with you, and (if it is possible) forget that enchanted cup that the hand of time spills for him in the middle of their journey!¹⁰

10. This is only the second reference to women in the *Letters*. But it is perhaps significant that it should be at the end of the text. In her edition of Condorcet's *Sketches*, Grouchy's added paragraphs on women and families are positioned at the beginning and the end of the text, thereby framing the argument. This may be a tactic for bringing women into philosophical debates without being obvious about it. See Bergès, "Family, Gender, and Progress" for a discussion of this.

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NOTE

Grouchy's terminology is much indebted to Locke's psychology and his philosophical vocabulary. At times her uses are indebted to eighteenth-century developments and revisions of Locke primarily due to work by Condillac, Hume, and Rousseau; sometimes her uses seem original to her.

The glossary is meant to facilitate understanding for readers who may be confused by eighteenth-century technical terminology. Sometimes we offer multiple meanings of a particular term; in general, Grouchy's context of use helps disambiguate which term is the pertinent.*

Abstraction (or abstract idea): A general idea that stands for all the objects of that kind. "Abstraction" refers to the process whereby an idea of a determinate object is stripped of features that would indicate it exists in a particular time or moment.

An abstract or general feeling: A feeling that stands for what all the feelings of a particular kind have in common.

Emotion: A feeling connected to or stirred in the body.

Enthusiasm: An individual's overconfident set of assumptions or commitments about a situation or person.

Generosity: The disposition to enjoy another's happiness.

Humanity: Depending on context, it is either (i) a moral category that encompasses all human beings; or (ii) a feeling that involves this moral category; or (iii) a commitment toward others. Having the feeling of humanity presupposes fellow feeling with the physical suffering of others; this begins, thus, as a kind of

generalized moral pity, but it can be cultivated into different feeling. The comportment presupposes the disposition to reflect and to show compassion to others.

Idea: A mental object produced by sensation or reflection.

Imagination: A mental capacity, or faculty, that operates on images. These can be images of reality, but need not be so.

Impression: Locke uses this term to refer to all perceptions. Not unlike Hume, Grouchy generally uses it more narrowly, in contrast to ideas or sensations, and then it refers to an original perception. But she follows Rousseau in distinguishing between general and local impressions:

General impression: A perception felt diffused through our body.

Local impression: A perception felt in a particular organ.

Moral (as opposed to “physical”): Depending on context, this can either mean “social” or “mental” (in the sense of “psychological”):

Moral idea: Idea about society.

Moral pain: Mental (or psychological) suffering.

Moral sentiment: Social (or cultivated) feeling.

Moral sensibility: The capacity to feel or apprehend another’s psychological feelings.

Moral sympathy: The (disposition to) fellow-feel with the psychological pains or pleasures of another person.

Passion: A feeling (or emotion) that stirs the mind, or is experienced by the mind as well as the body.

Physiognomy: Thought to be a promising science in the eighteenth century, in which a person’s face or appearance is used to evaluate character.

Pity: Concern for a person without fellow feeling. (Of course, pity can also accompany compassion.)

Reflection (or reflexion): A technical term in Lockean psychology. It is a mental mechanism akin to sensation that is a source of experience. The material the mechanism works with (or reflects) is always internal to the mind.

Sensation: The mechanism by which we have experience of external objects (through the senses).

Sensitivity/sensibility: A property of matter that facilitates our capacity to experience the world through the senses. For Grouchy, it’s a disposition that can be cultivated and improved.

Sentiment: A feeling accompanied by a thought. So, in particular, it is any thought prompted by a passion:

Natural sentiment: An uncultivated feeling accompanied by a thought.

Moral sentiment: A cultivated or social feeling accompanied by a thought.

Soul: Generally, this means the mind of a person. Grouchy seems to be a materialist or functionalist, so there is no need to infer that she embraces an immortal or immaterial substance. Sometimes she uses “soul” to refer to the character of a

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person. She sometimes uses *esprit*, which also means “mind,” but tends to refer to a person’s intellectual, rather than emotional functions.

Sympathy: A disposition to fellow feeling with others:

General sympathy: Fellow feeling with the pain (or pleasures) of a class of human beings (or even mankind).

Personal sympathy: Fellow feeling with the psychological pain (or pleasures) of a particular individual.

Particular sympathy: Fellow feeling with the pain (or pleasures) of a particular individual.

Utility: In her standard use, Grouchy uses “utility” to refer to common (or shared) or general interest. Sometimes it just means “usefulness.”