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# On Behalfness: Siding with Others in Action and Emotion

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## Abstract

Everyday understanding takes empathy to be not just emotional mirroring with a specific etiology, but also a form of feeling for, or on behalf of, another. This article proposes an analysis of that *for*-relation. The analysis begins with the phenomenon of acting on behalf, which is then used as a template for an analysis of generic on behalfness, applicable to both action and emotion. The key to the relation turns out to be an agent's espousal of a target's goal, in light of which the agent acquires reasons for acting or feeling.

**Keywords:** emotion; action on behalf; empathy; reasons; goals

## 1. Vicarious Emotion and Emotion on Behalf

Jesse Prinz has claimed that empathy has no role to play in morality. Prinz's claim is plausible in light of his view of what empathy is. According to Prinz, empathy is the feeling of emotion by agent A that is of the same type as that of target person T, where the cause of the emotion in A is A's belief that T is in the relevant emotional state (Prinz, 2011, 215). Prinz follows researchers in empirical psychology in contrasting empathy with sympathy (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987, 5ff.). The latter is the feeling of some agent *for* another agent. Sympathy, unlike empathy, involves a concern for the wellbeing of the other agent. Sympathy may be thought to involve a feeling of sorrow for T in view of T's apparent, perhaps impending, welfare deficit, conjoined with the motivation to alleviate that deficit. The sorrow and motivational components are the relational features of sympathy referred to by saying that A feels sympathy *for* T.

It is easy to see why this attitudinal constellation appears to be interpersonally and morally significant. In contrast, merely feeling what another is feeling, and doing so because you believe that the other has this feeling, looks like a state that is equally open to ethical use, misuse, or non-use. Just as we might recognize that we are yawning because someone else is doing so, then shrug and get on with our life, we might take on the same attitude to our reproducing someone else's emotion. The proclivity to emotion mirroring is, of course, epistemically valuable: we sometimes seem able to conclude from our own experience of some affect that a conspecific is also experiencing it. But, like all epistemic tools, empathy, thus understood, can be put to ethically problematic uses. Perhaps the sadist wants a specifically experiential confirmation that his victim is suffering, which he gains through a faint echo of the victim's anguish. And even where we are moved to help someone because we "feel their pain" (Slote, 2007, 13), we need some further motivational source to move us to alleviate it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This is true whether the motivational source is an internalistically construed moral judgement or simply a desire.

Nevertheless, empathy has seemed to many philosophers to be of great ethical significance.<sup>2</sup> This is because at least certain phenomena often called “empathy” are assumed to be more than mere emotion mirroring plus a specific etiology. To see this, we need to leave aside purely epistemic —“mindreading”—cases. We can then focus on a—large—group of cases which, like sympathy, involve a *for*-relation towards the target. However, as we shall see, the *for*-relation in these cases is decisively different.<sup>3</sup>

To begin to get the relation in focus, let us start with some examples. The relation is in play where John feels joy for his daughter when she wins the race and where Afra is afraid for Tara as she sees the big dog approaching her.

Such states are sometimes characterized as “vicarious,” a term which etymologically picks out the idea of turn or replacement. This basic idea admits of various readings. In some sense, John is feeling joy “in place of” his daughter. But this might simply mean that he is experiencing the emotion in turn, after she has experienced it. Indeed, the primary use of “vicarious” in social and developmental psychology undercuts any claim that the term picks out a *for*-relation. In seminal studies of differences between empathy and personal distress, where the latter involves an agent’s focus on her self, both kinds of the psychological process are characterized as vicarious (Batson et al., 1987; Eisenberg, 1989). Thus understood, a vicarious emotion is simply an emotion that satisfies the type identity and causal conditions that Prinz rightly sees as ethically inert.

However, “vicarious” emotions are sometimes taken to satisfy a further normative condition, along with the mirroring and causal conditions. This condition specifies that A’s emotion is more appropriate to T’s situation than to A’s own (Hoffman, 2000, 29; Maibom, 2007, 163; Maibom, 2014, 5). This seems closer. However, there are two reasons why the condition cannot mark the essence of the relevant *for*-relation.

First, the move to normativity turns out to be question-begging: there is no good reason why we should think of a parent’s, or a friend’s, joy or fear for some target as being less appropriate to the parent’s or friend’s situation than to that of the target. After all, the fact that one’s child or friend is in a wonderful or dangerous situation is a feature of one’s own situation. The claim that egocentric emotions are more appropriate than other-directed emotions is certainly anything but uncontroversial.

Second, the appropriateness of an emotion to another’s situation is, even in combination with the satisfaction of the mirroring and causal conditions, insufficient for that emotion being felt *for* the other. Consider Avi, whose appropriate fear that Tara might be bitten by a dog is triggered by witnessing Tara’s fearful behavior. But Avi is not afraid *for* Tara. What grounds Avi’s fear is his own squeamishness when he sees blood; he has no concern whatsoever for whether being bitten matters *to* Tara. Here, Tara’s role is to trigger Avi’s fear. There is no sense in which Avi is afraid on Tara’s behalf.

There is, however, one prominent philosophical passage where talk of vicariousness does pick out the *for*-relation. The passage is in Strawson’s “Freedom and Resentment,” where Strawson characterizes indignation as “the vicarious analogue of resentment,” a characterisation he elucidates as “resentment on behalf of another” (Strawson, 1962, 15). Indignation as resentment on behalf of another contrasts with straightforward resentment on one’s own behalf. The indignant responder in some sense takes up the position of the target in responding to an agent who acted illicitly towards the target.

One might talk here of “perspective taking,” an expression frequently used to characterize empathy. If one does, though, “perspective taking” should not be thought of as an epistemic move. It

<sup>2</sup>Hume (1739–40) and Smith (1759–1790) changed the terms of eighteenth-century ethical discussion, arguing that empathy (eighteenth-century “sympathy”) was key to grounding morality in emotions. Emotional intersubjectivity, rather than emotional sensitivity to value, was, they thought, decisive. Examples of philosophers who have recently followed them are Slote (2007), Kauppinen (2014), Stueber (2017) and Roughley (2018).

<sup>3</sup>For more on the distinction between sympathy and empathy, see Roughley and Schramme, 2018, 16ff.

is not a matter of coming to *believe* certain things. Believing cannot be done “on behalf of someone.” This seems to be because the contents of beliefs cannot, from the point of view of the believer, depend on the believer’s will. In contrast, the “perspective taking” involved in emoting on behalf seems somehow to engage the responder’s will, although it does so below the level of fully fledged action. This fits the Strawsonian claim that resentment and indignation are ways of blaming others, where blame is not simply the acquisition of an evaluative belief or perception, but equally does not require the performance of speech acts.<sup>4</sup> If this is correct, taking on an emotion on behalf of another is in some way active or agential. However, the way in which this is the case may appear obscure.

It is the burden of this article to explain the sense in which such an agential feature is key to the *for*-relation at work in many cases of affective empathy. Whether our widespread disposition to instantiate this *for*-relation in empathy can, pace Prinz, play a substantial role in morality is a topic for further research. One result of this discussion will, however, be that a dismissal of the ethical importance of emotion mirroring is insufficient to justify rejecting empathy’s ethical importance.

The case for thinking of empathy as involving an agential *for*-relation can take its starting point from cases of acting on behalf. The idea of acting on behalf of another is perhaps the more familiar one, as we explicitly recognize instances of it in all sorts of everyday contexts, both in intimate relationships and in forms of institutional representation. Hence, it is arguably more readily accessible than the *for*-relation at work in affective empathy. For this reason, it is worth beginning with a fairly detailed look at the constitutive structure of on behalfness in the action case. Doing so will provide a template for the analysis of emotion on behalf. Moreover, this procedure will enable us to see that cases of both kinds instantiate a generic relation of on behalfness. Or so I shall be arguing.

Action on behalf will be the topic of the next three sections. The first of these circumscribes the relation, situating it relative to closely related features, before Section 3 then advances a first-pass analysis of acting on behalf and clarifies its key properties. Section 4 then discusses important objections, responding to one of which requires a significant tweak of the analysis. In Section 5, I bring the analysis to bear on emotion cases. Doing so involves showing that two key disanalogies between action and emotion do not prevent us from identifying the same relation at work in both cases. That there are, nevertheless, important characteristic differences between the two kinds of cases is discussed in the final section. There I also note important differences between forms of on behalfness—for instance, in legal representation and friendship—which can cut across the distinctions between action and emotion cases.

## 2. Circumscribing Action on Behalf

“Behalf” derives etymologically from the idea of being “by” someone’s “half,” where “half” means “side.” An agent acting on behalf of a target is *siding with* the target. Here are some everyday examples of one agent siding with another: Luke looks after his friends’ children for them while they are away; Sue reaches up to a high supermarket shelf to pick up an item out of reach of an elderly customer; passer-by Parisa steps in to defend little Liam against an assailant on the street.

Luke, Sue, and Parisa initiate a *for*-relation to the friends, the elderly customer, and little Liam respectively. In a first step to uncovering the key components of the relation, we should note that several features frequently in play in such cases are not essential.

### 2.a. Contingent features

**Motivation to disburden:** First, although people frequently act on behalf of another to make things easier for them, such motivation is unnecessary for on behalfness. This is clear from the fact that

<sup>4</sup>Compare Coates & Tognazzini, 2013.

someone can act on behalf of a deceased person. For example, a daughter might express gratitude on behalf of her deceased mother to a benefactor her mother never had the chance to meet. This is acting on behalf, it seems natural to think, because the daughter is in some sense realizing, or attempting to realize, what she takes to be the will of her mother. The fact that she cannot bring her mother satisfaction, or improve her wellbeing in any way, is beside the point.

**Benefit:** This simple point helps us to reject a more general proposal as to what acting on behalf of might consist in: the idea that thus acting is essentially a matter of acting in order to benefit T or increase their welfare. Of course, in many everyday cases, an orientation to someone's will and to their welfare will generate the same result (Pitkin, 1967, 156). However, when someone asks us to do something for them, we can do it on their behalf without needing to consider whether doing so really will benefit them. Indeed, we can do something on behalf of some T whilst believing that it will not enhance their wellbeing, even believing that the deed might be detrimental to it. T might request that A brings him some homeopathic medicine, which A believes is at best useless, possibly even harmful. Nevertheless, it seems that A can still pick up the medicine (or "medicine") on T's behalf.

**Requests:** Acting on behalf of someone, we can say, involves adopting their "will" at least in the local matter at hand, and attempting to realize it. This is the sense in which A takes up the agential perspective of T relative to some state of affairs. For the purposes of this article, I will take it that the will of an agent is simply a relevant goal she possesses in that context. We will return to the idea of goal possession. Here, we can note the default everyday assumption that a person's requests are reliable guides to their goals. Only where we have indications that she is under duress, under psychological compulsion, or massively deluded do we retreat from the assumption. Nevertheless, requests are not necessary for an agent to act on behalf of a target. There are other sources of knowledge or belief that T has a goal, which may well ground A's action on behalf of T. The behavior of the elderly supermarket customer may suffice for Sue to draw conclusions about the customer's goal; knowledge of the general human aversion to being attacked is likely to allow Parisa to attribute the goal of self-defence of Liam.<sup>5</sup>

**Institutionalization:** The fact that no explicit request is needed for behalffness helps to situate another key set of cases. Certain institutional arrangements, particularly those of judicial and political representation, are set up to enable specific individuals to act on behalf of others. Lawyers act on behalf of their clients and elected representatives are supposed to act on behalf of their constituents. In spite of their differences, these cases are unified by requiring explicit delegation of the principal's "will." Moreover, this explicit step of transfer also involves the principal renouncing her own agency in the matter at hand, at least up to a point. However, neither of these features—delegation or investment with independent authority to act—need to be present for action to be performed on behalf of another. Their necessity is, rather, a consequence of the institutionalization of on behalffness. Such formalized features both specify legal or political criteria for on behalffness and set its limits. In such contexts, we need to know whether the *for*-relation is instantiated and how far it reaches; although everyday behalffness can involve such explicit delegation, its precise contours are often less tangible.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.b. Normative on behalffness

Political and legal forms of action on behalf of others are restricted and channeled by norms. Moreover, certain everyday cases also involve important normative dimensions. Take the example of A standing up for T's moral right not to be subject to racist abuse. Speaking up for someone's moral claims is certainly an important example of acting on behalf of another. It has recently been

<sup>5</sup>Hence, Phillippe Lusson's recent proposal that a "vicarious action" be understood as an action of an agent performed in response to the demand of a principal (Lusson, 2021) only picks out a restricted class of actions performed on another's behalf.

<sup>6</sup>In her classic discussion of the concept of political representation, Hannah Pitkin argues that the concept essentially involves both the *for*-relation instantiated in acting for others and a restriction of that relation, designed to give the representative some independence (Pitkin, 1967, 153). According to Pitkin, the latter feature provides a foothold for the claim that political representation involves acting to benefit the represented, rather than simply responding to the constituents' wants. For complications involved in legal representation, see Salkin, 2020.

proposed that we should think of all action on behalf of others as normatively constituted. More precisely, the proposal is that A's  $\phi$ -ing is an action on behalf of T iff it is constitutive of A's  $\phi$ -ing that A acts on claims, duties, or normative powers derived from the claims, duties, or normative powers of T (Edlich & Vandieken, 2022, 543). A speaks up on behalf of the racially abused T by expressing T's right not to be thus abused. According to the proposal, this is even possible if T does not have the goal of standing up for her rights in the context (Edlich & Vandieken, 2022, 546). Presumably, it is also compatible with T not having any goal to stand up for her rights.

This view appears to be only applicable to a highly restricted set of cases. In this, it contrasts with the goal-based view. The two views are equally applicable where A acts to realise a goal of T's and where that goal is derived from some normative status that T has. However, if the normative status does not generate a goal of T, A can still act normatively on behalf of T, but cannot do so on the goal-based view. The example of A protesting against the racial abuse of T, where T has no goal to protest against being abused, is a case in point.

Conversely, if T's relevant goal does not derive from a normative status, the view proposed here will support the assertion that A acts on behalf of T, whereas the assertion would be false on the normative view. Indeed, the normative view appears to exclude the majority of cases we would normally classify as action on behalf of another. A can adopt T's goal to realize p and realize p on behalf of T whether or not T has a claim that p be realized. Most such cases will presumably count as normatively permitted. But to  $\phi$  where  $\phi$ -ing is permitted is not to  $\phi$  because  $\phi$ -ing is permitted. It will be to do so for some other reason. A might, for instance, simply think that her (A's)  $\phi$ -ing would save T time and  $\phi$  for that reason. Indeed, according to everyday understanding, it is not even true that what A does on behalf of T has to be morally permissible. T might have a blood feud with S and intend to murder S; knowing this, A might murder S on T's behalf.

The normative and goal-based views seem to reconstruct distinct and apparently compatible, if overlapping relations. One might wonder whether one of the views is more basic and could therefore be used to reconstruct the other.<sup>7</sup>

The normative account might appear to be the basic one if setting and pursuing goals is construed as necessarily acting on a normative power. However, this strategy raises the question as to what acting *on* a normative power might mean. Acting on claims or duties is naturally understood as acting for reasons provided by, or constitutive of, such normative statuses. Normative powers, in contrast, are exercised and hence do not entertain the same kind of relationship to reasons. Moreover, a strategy that emphasizes the normative powers at work in morally uninteresting everyday human behavior would presumably deny that non-human animals can set and pursue goals in the same sense that humans can. The analysis of goals I propose in the following section requires no components that are only accessible to agents involved in normatively structured interaction. I would suggest that parsimony at this point keeps us closer to our everyday understanding.

Alternatively, one might attempt to ground the normative view in the goal-based view. One could see the claims advocated for in normative on behalfness as derived from goals of the relevant normative community, which is thought of as the issuer of relevant principles or norms. These goals could be in place even if individuals protected by the norms do not share them. This strategy would, however, be incompatible with Edlich and Vandieken's account, which grounds in a relational view of morality, according to which moral claims have their "sources" in individuals (Edlich & Vandieken, 2022, 552f; Wallace, 2019, 62). They emphasize this feature of their view in order to reconstruct the intuition that the relevant moral claims are advanced on behalf of particular others, rather than on behalf of moral principles, or indeed of the moral community. Hence, their view depends on the truth of a very specific moral metaphysics, a fact which naturally reduces its ecumenical appeal. A view that assigns "the moral community" relevant goals would, however, be no less rich in metaethical presuppositions.

<sup>7</sup>The two strategies presented in following paragraphs were suggested by different reviewers.

The key case of apparent normative on behalfness that would remain outside the purview of the latter view is one in which (a) a victim would not even have a *pro tanto* desire for her claim's satisfaction if she were to be presented with the key normative and empirical details of her case,<sup>8</sup> and (b) the agent's proactive intervention nevertheless appears insufficiently described as an intervention in the name of what is morally right. Whether there are such cases would have to be elucidated by attention to specific examples. If it turns out that there are, further metaethical accounts would also be explanatory contenders, such as an Adam Smithian view that the relevant goals are those of impartial respondents. Adjudicating these important issues is clearly beyond the scope of this paper.

### 3. Action on Behalf: The Initial Proposal

I characterized the key to the relevant *for*-relation as A adopting T's "will" in the matter at hand. For A to do so, I suggested further, is for her to adopt a goal T possesses in the context. There are a number of issues that need clarifying so that we can work with this proposal. We need clarity, first, on the concept of a *goal* and on that of *goal possession*; second, on the way goal possession relates to the *motivating reasons* that an agent has for her action; and third, on how we should conceive goal *adoption* and the reasons thus generated for A. Once we have clarity on these elements, I will be in a position to present a first-pass analysis of acting on behalf.

#### 3.a. Goal possession

Begin with the first issue: talk of *goals* is ambiguous between talk of states of affairs that are aimed at and talk of aiming at such states of affairs. Simply naming a state of affairs does not specify that the attitude to it is one of aiming. "(My) owning a mansion in Hollywood" or "world peace" can, in one sense, be goals, but they can also be the objects of other attitudes, such as belief, pride, or satisfaction. We can express that a state of affairs is a goal by inserting its representation into the structure "Let it be the case that p." An attitude that is adequately expressed in this way can be labeled "optative."<sup>9</sup> According to this wide conceptualization, goals can be set by whimsical, evanescent desires or by the wholehearted subscription to what one takes to be non-negotiable values or principles. On behalfness can therefore be in play either in momentous or trivial matters.

It seems, though, that there are some goals of an agent one cannot adopt in order to act on their behalf. People can be alienated from goals. We can stipulate that these are goals of an agent that she does not *possess*. As already indicated, duress, psychological compulsion, or massive delusion can lead us to refrain from seeing a goal expressed by an agent as possessed by her. Under such circumstances, the goal is no longer a candidate to ground action on behalf of T. Conversely, there are circumstances under which T has not taken a positive optative stance on some matter, but where A is convinced that T would take such a stance if she were to attain awareness of the relevant circumstances. If A thinks T would want a ticket to some event if T knew it was imminent, A can buy the ticket on T's behalf, although T has not formed a relevant desire because of her lack of a relevant belief. Hence, the "will" adopted may be a desiderative disposition, where the agent believes the disposition would be triggered under ameliorated cognitive conditions. The rationale for circumscribing goal possession in these ways is that, when A ascribes a goal to T as the basis for acting on T's behalf, A is taking it that this is "where T stands" on the matter at hand.

<sup>8</sup>See Section 3.a.

<sup>9</sup>I assume that the non-propositional expressions often used in everyday talk of goals can be unproblematically transformed into propositional form. On optative attitudinising, see Roughley, 2016, 88ff.



### 3.b. Motivating reasons and expressive actions

The second issue concerns the way an agent's goal-orientation relates to her possession of *motivating reasons* for action. The reasons, I assume, are facts. Certain facts are motivating reasons for an agent in view of their relevance for the realization of her goals, where goals can include values or principles that are optatively underwritten.<sup>10</sup> Thus understood, most of our motivating reasons are "instrumental": in acting for such a reason, an agent takes some fact, in view of which her  $\phi$ -ing appears necessary for, or conducive to, the realization of her goal, to be a sufficient reason for her  $\phi$ -ing. The goal is no part of the reason, but is, in the background, essential to the fact's being a motivating reason. The fact that T's flowers need water is a reason for her to water them in view of her desire to have flourishing flowers.<sup>11</sup> The same fact becomes a reason for A to water the flowers on behalf of T in view of A's adoption of T's goal.

There is, however, a class of actions the reasons for which are not, even in this sense, instrumental. Not all facts that motivate our actions do so because they appear indicative of opportunities to attain goals. This led Rosalind Hursthouse to postulate a class of "arational actions": someone who jumps for joy or hides their face in shame is not doing so in order to attain some goal (Hursthouse, 1991, 58). Moreover, at least some such actions can also be performed on behalf of others, such as when a father jumps for joy at his daughter's performance or a daughter hides her face in shame at her father's behavior. Hence, if A's possession of a goal  $g$  is a crucial background condition for her acquisition of motivating reasons to  $\phi$ —whether in *propria persona* or on behalf of T—this condition cannot depend on A construing her  $\phi$ -ing as a means to attaining  $g$ . Instead, a fact's enabling or constraining action suitable to attaining  $g$  will have to be a specification of a more general schema for motivating reasons that also encompasses spontaneous actions which express the agent's subscription to  $g$ .

In fact, Hursthouse had claimed that such actions are not performed for reasons at all. She based this claim on a Davidsonian belief/desire account of reasons. However, a number of authors have convincingly disputed the claim. According to Monika Betzler, reasons for such expressive actions are furnished by "challenges" to an agent's evaluative perspective (Betzler, 2009, 280); according to Chris Bennett, situations an agent takes to contain a particular value or disvalue provide reasons to perform actions that "do justice" to the situation's importance for the agent (Bennett, 2016, 78ff.). On both accounts, the status of facts as reasons derives from something or someone mattering to the agent in a way that is impacted by the relevant facts. In other words, the agent with motivating reasons for expressive action subscribes to some value. Such subscription, I have claimed, involves taking on an optative stance of the form "Let  $p$  be the case."

The decisive point for our purposes is that facts provide motivating reasons for spontaneous expressive actions for A where they appear to indicate that a goal of A's, i.e., the content of an optative stance of hers, has been impacted in some specific way. The apparent realization of a goal can be a sufficient reason to jump for joy; its frustration a reason to swear; its definitive defeat a reason to tear one's hair. In contrast to cases of instrumental action, the action schemas realized in such spontaneous expressive actions may not figure in the content of any belief of the agent. Such schemas may be partially innate or simply overlearned reaction types.

An spontaneous expressive action  $\phi$ , we can say, involves an agent treating some fact  $p$ , in view of  $p$ 's apparent relevance for the realisability of her goal, as a sufficient reason for her  $\phi$ -ing. This circumscription is wider than that covering instrumental motivating reasons, which ground in a specific form of relevance: that the fact is one in light of which the action appears conducive to the goal's realization. Hence, the characterization appropriate for expressive action turns out to be the generic characterization required to cover both variants of motivating reasons. Moreover, the characterization is transferrable to expressive action on behalf of others: a father has sufficient

<sup>10</sup>In contrast, normative reasons concern justifications of, among other things, subscribing to principles. Hence, even a thoroughgoing "instrumentalism" about motivating reasons would not entail instrumentalism about normative reasons.

<sup>11</sup>On background conditions for reasons, see Schroeder, 2007, 27ff.

reason to jump for joy at his daughter's winning the race because it impacts his adopted goal that she be successful; and a father's spilling beer all over himself provides his daughter with sufficient reason to hide her face in shame because it impacts her adopted goal that he not make a fool of himself.

### 3.c. Goal adoption and reason acquisition

Returning to action on behalf: I am proposing that A's  $\phi$ -ing on behalf of T involves A adopting T's goal and, as a result, acquiring T's reasons for  $\phi$ -ing. Now, we can say that adopting a goal is simply a matter of taking an optative stance on the matter at hand. What is then decisive is the connection between A's stance and the (perhaps counterfactual) stance of T. We are interested in cases in which A adopts some g that she believes T possesses *because* she (A) believes that T possesses g. The "because" here is both causal and justificatory: the effect of A's belief that T has goal g is A's adoption and pursuit of g in virtue of A's taking T's possession of g to justify her (A's) adopting and pursuing it herself. Importantly, the justificatory component excludes A's belief that g is T's goal from leading A to adopt g "behind her (A's) own back": she cannot just find herself with the goal as a result of the ascription. She needs to think that the fact that the goal is T's is a reason for her (A) to adopt it and then do so for that reason. Where this is the case, I shall talk of *allogenic goal adoption* (AGA).<sup>12</sup>

Where A takes T's possession of g to be a reason for her (A) to adopt g, her doing so will in turn generally ground in other reasons. Those reasons will frequently be relational: that T is A's daughter, belongs to some social group to which A belongs, or that T is someone A admires. However, the reason might be non-relational, as with the fact that T is suffering in some specific way.

In short, AGA is a move made for a reason (that g is T's). On the one hand, this reason is likely to be backed up by some further fact, which A takes to justify seeing T's possession of g as such a reason. On the other hand, AGA puts A in a position to acquire a new set of reasons: certain facts that are otherwise irrelevant to the agent become motivating reasons for her. To act on behalf of someone thus involves acting for the reason that p, where the status of p as a reason is grounded in an allogenically adopted goal.

### 3.d. The initial proposal

We now have the materials to present a first-pass analysis of acting on behalf:

#### (AOB/1)

A acts on behalf of T in  $\phi$ -ing iff:

1. A takes some fact p, in view of p's apparent relevance for the realisability of goal g, to be a sufficient reason for her  $\phi$ -ing;
2. A adopts g because she believes g to be T's goal;
3. A  $\phi$ s for the reason that p, where that reason is grounded in the apparent realisability relevance described in (1) and the allogenic feature described in (2).

AOB/1 is just the structured presentation of the materials we have been discussing. Condition 3, however, requires a brief comment: it connects A's action to her taking p as a reason with a particular kind of grounding. Without such an explicit connection it is possible that A might take p to be a reason grounded in more than one way and act for the reason that p, construed in some other way. Perhaps A enjoys looking after children so much that, although she takes T's desire that the kids be looked after to ground as a sufficient reason for her to do so, she is just looking forward to looking after children again. She might then agree to do so for the latter, rather than for the former,

<sup>12</sup>In geology, "allogenic" pertains to rock fragments that are formed in one location, then transported to another location before being deposited there.



reason. What guides her action has to be her taking of *p* to be a reason, where the reason is grounded in her allogenic goal adoption in conjunction with the realizability relevance of *p*.

#### 4. Objections and a Tweak

Now that a proposal is on the table, a number of worries about its viability can be discussed. These concern its coherence and extensional adequacy.

##### 4.a. Indexicality

The first worry concerns the coherence of the concept of AGA. Goals' contents generally involve reference to their subject. For example, John's daughter can express her goal as "that I win the race." The self-reference by means of the first-person singular pronoun is, as Castañeda and Perry have influentially argued, irreducible to any reference mediated by reference to properties or names. Most importantly here, it picks out its referent in a way that allows the direct engagement of the referent's action-guiding and deliberative mechanisms. Perry thought that no belief that identifies Perry via property ascription can be the "same belief" as one referring to himself by means of "I" (Perry, 1979, 3). Should we, similarly, worry that it is impossible for A to adopt T's goal, as the change in the way of referring to T entails that A cannot have the same goal as T? Certainly, in taking on T's goal, A cannot represent T's goal in such a way that the connection to T's system of action control is upheld. Through the goal's allogenic adoption, the connection is instead established to A's own action control system. Indeed, that is the whole point of AGA.

It is a matter of metasemantic controversy how to characterize the difference between John's daughter's self-reference and John's reference to her by means of "she." But even if the difference is taken to be one of content, and not merely of mode of presentation, it is difficult to see why this threatens the idea of AGA. John can think about his daughter's goal in a way that recognises her as its agent, without being able to inhabit her first-person agential perspective. Even if the goal's content changes, it is surely close enough. Indeed, Castañeda claims that we have specific semantic means to refer to the first-person perspective of another agent, in spite of our inability to express that perspective (Castañeda, 1967, 94). Third-person pronouns such as "she" and "her," when used in certain ways in attitude ascription, are what he calls "quasi-indicators." Their function, he claims, is precisely to enable intersubjective reference to "indicators" such as "I" and "me," whilst taking account of the irreducibility of the first-person standpoint to which such indicators provide a direct referential route.

The importance of "quasi-indicators" in thinking about others' goals becomes clear when we turn to a first type of case that might be thought to show that the AOB/1 conditions are insufficient:

*Competition:* A is a highly competitive person, whose goal setting and corresponding action are controlled by the thought that *g* is a goal of her competitor T. This thought motivates her to try to achieve *g* before T does.

A is clearly not siding with, but working against, T. But there may appear to be a sense in which A adopts *g* because she believes *g* to be T's goal and acts for reasons that are indicative of *g*'s realisability. Nevertheless, A does not really adopt T's own goal. This can be seen from the fact that A eradicates any reference to T's agential perspective in the goal's content, instead deploying her (A's) own first-person "indicator." Adopting T's goal would require that A respect T's agential perspective, picking it out by means of a third-person "quasi-indicator." The competitor acquires the goal that she, the competitor, acquire some property, not that T do so. The same is true of what we might call "copycat action," in which A pursues *g* in order to be like T. Again, A's goal will be indexed to A herself, and not to T: because T dyes her hair blue, A dyes her, A's, hair blue. But that

A's hair be blue is no goal of T's. Hence, competition and copycat action are incompatible with AGA, not counterexamples.

#### 4.b. *Agent-neutral goals and extensional adequacy*

However, index adjustment cannot deal with all issues of extensional adequacy. This is a result of the fact that not all an agent's goals are indexed to the agent herself. The contents of some of our goals do not involve us: we can aim at peace between warring factions or at higher academic standards. Call these "agent-neutral goals." Where T has such goals, their adoption by A will not involve their indexing to A.

A little reflection suffices to show that allogenic adoption of agent-neutral goals can only take place under very special circumstances. This is because agent-neutral goals essentially ground in the value they are taken to have. But where an agent takes on a goal because of its putative value, she does not take it on merely because it is the goal of some other agent. Brief consideration of the way in which children come to take on the goals of their parents may be helpful here.<sup>13</sup>

Importantly, most cases of children's adoption of their parents' goals are not cases of AGA. First, children adopt many goals because their parents have these goals, but without seeing their parents' possession of the goals as *justifying* their adoption. Such processes involve causality without any sense of justification. Second, when children do adopt their parents' goals for what they take to be good reasons, the reasons that sway them will very often concern other matters: avoidance of disapproval, garnering of approval, or the presumed value of the goals. Goals adopted for any of these reasons are not allogenically adopted. So, even when a child does adopt an agent-neutral goal of their parents, such as tidiness, the standard cases will not involve AGE. Children are likely to begin with automatic, justification-independent goal acquisition—inculcation—before perhaps coming to appreciate what they take to be the goal's agent-neutral value. Where this is the case, neither phase of the goal's possession involves allogenic goal adoption.

This leaves us with very few cases. Perhaps a child might adopt the goal of a tidy dining room simply because she knows her father always aims to keep the dining room tidy—although she cannot see any value in tidiness and is unconcerned with his approval. If this is the case, when the child tidies up, she is indeed acting on her father's behalf. She is then doing something for her father; she is doing it merely because her father wants the state of affairs that she is bringing about to be brought about.

There are, however, two types of counterexamples that AOB/1 cannot deal with. Both concern the temporal gap between the moment of adoption of a goal and the moment at which on behalfness is in play. In the first case, A at t<sub>1</sub> adopts the agent-neutral goal of tidiness merely because it is T's, but by t<sub>2</sub> comes to believe that tidiness is instrumentally good. She continues to pursue it for this latter reason, even though she has in the meantime cut off all contact to T. Where this is the case, A is at t<sub>2</sub> no longer acting on behalf of T. However, an advocate of AOB/1 is stuck with the assertion that this is a case of on behalfness, as all three conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are insufficient after all.

It turns out that they are also unnecessary. In order to see this, we can imagine an unusual example in which A acts on behalf of T by pursuing an agent-neutral goal of T's:

*Beaten-up activist:* An agent working for peace in some local context is attacked in the course of her work. A spokesman for the group of which she is a member calls, on behalf of the victim, for exclusively non-violent responses in the belief that such responses further the goal that grounds the motivating reasons for the victim's work.

<sup>13</sup>I am grateful to the referees for pressing me to establish clarity on these cases.

Here, A's action on behalf of T does not involve A adopting T's agent-neutral goal of regional peace because it is T's. A's having the role of group spokesman entails his antecedent possession of the goal. This, let us assume, was the case because of the value A already took the goal to have. AGA, then, cannot be a necessary condition of on behalfness. Indeed, it may seem that, in this case, A cannot even act on behalf of T if on behalfness is goal-based.

#### 4.c. From adoption to espousal: the tweak

Fortunately, we can explain where things have gone wrong. On behalfness is indeed goal-based, but the form of goal-basing needs reconceptualizing. What is required turns out not to be a genetic condition, but a *guidance condition*: that A's action is guided by g, in light of relevant beliefs of A, where and because A construes g as a goal of T's. Where a goal guides an agent's action, I shall talk of *goal espousal* on the part of the agent. Where A espouses T's goal, A's action is responsive to features of the world that A thinks would make a difference in the way T would attempt to realize the goal. Now, where A possesses the same agent-neutral goal in proprio persona, her pursuit of the goal as T's goal may or may not make an observable difference. However, where this is not the case, the difference can be revealed by relevant counterfactuals. These can concern, first, the action's *performance or non-performance* or, second, the *way or style* in which the action is performed.

Beaten-up activist provides an example of the first kind. Here, the spokesman calls for exclusively non-violent responses because he takes such a call to further the goal of regional peace, doing so because the continuing pursuit of the goal is what he takes T to want. Because he already possessed the background goal, he may well have performed precisely this action anyway, without any thoughts for T's goals. But imagine that his spokesperson role involves all sorts of other duties and that, had it not been T who had been struck down, he would have prioritized another of those duties. Such a counterfactual supports the claim that he is pursuing the goal he already had under a particular guise, that is, as the goal of T. Here, it is the spokesman's conceptualization of the goal as the victim's that explains its guidance of the spokesman's behavior.

Another more prosaic case provides an example of the second kind: A's flat has a number of plants that she wants to flourish. T, who moves in, is more strongly invested in plant flourishing than is A and takes over watering duties. As a result of her stronger attachment to the plants, T takes their flourishing more seriously than A does. When T is away for a longer period, A takes over plant watering duties again, now attempting to fulfil these in the particularly serious and detailed way that T would. A has in propria persona the goal that the plants flourish; however, were she not to conceive the goal as T's, she would be much more lackadaisical in pursuing the goal.

We can think of A's guidance by a goal in view of its ascription to T as involving a specific mode of representation, in part constituted by the deployment of "quasi-indicators" to make salient the first-person perspective of T. In order to capture the case in which A espouses a goal because it is T's, I will talk of *allopsychic* goal espousal. This slightly heavy-handed terminology seems worthwhile, as it makes explicit the replacement of a genetic condition by a guidance condition that merely presupposes that A takes T to possess the goal, independently of how A came to have the goal herself.<sup>14</sup>

Replacing allogenic goal adoption (AGA) with allopsychic goal espousal (AGE) solves the extensionality problems of AOB/1. An analysis that works with AGA overgenerates since it is compatible with A adopting g because it is T's, but then pursuing g for other reasons—perhaps because A now believes g is valuable. If A's  $\varphi$ -ing is *under the control of allopsychic construal*, this possibility is excluded.

The requirement that the response be guided by an allopsychically espoused goal also solves the problem that AOB/1 undergenerates. Whereas working with AGA excludes A acting on behalf of T

<sup>14</sup> „Allopsychic“ is used in clinical psychology to refer to the – usually delusional – projection of one's own mental states onto others. I am using it simply to refer to an agent's orientation to another's mental state.

if A has g independently of T, switching to AGE allows acting on behalf under such conditions. The *occurrent guidance of an action by a goal seen as justified as a result of its possession by another agent* is independent of who had the goal first. Hence, we can explain how, in Beaten-up activist and in the flower-watering example, A can act on behalf of T.

Replacing AGA with AGE in the analysis of acting on behalf produces corresponding modifications of condition 2 (“A espouses g” replaces “A adopts g”) and condition 3 (“the allopsychic,” rather than “the allogenic feature”) of AOB/1. At the end of the following section, I will provide a definitive analysis of generic on behalfness, which incorporates this tweak.

## 5. Emotional on Behalfness

Having taken this detour, we can now turn to the claim that the analysis of acting on behalf can serve as a template for understanding emoting on behalf, and thus as the key to the *for*-relation at work in certain cases of affective empathy. Let us return to the examples with which we illustrated the empathic *for*-relation in Section 1: John’s joy for his daughter and Afra’s fear for Tara.

### 5.a. Analogies with action

The first thing to notice is that, in each of these cases, the agent might have responded with an action to the considerations in light of which they responded emotionally.<sup>15</sup> For example, if Afra is near enough to Tara, she might move between her and the dog. Conversely, an agent can take on an emotion on another’s behalf in view of the same considerations as those in view of which they can act on their behalf. It is natural to say that they can do so for the same reasons:<sup>16</sup> John’s daughter’s crossing the line first is a reason for his joy; that the dog is large and has sharp teeth is a reason for Afra’s fear.

Emotions on behalf of some T, then, are like actions on behalf of T in being responses to reasons the responder takes T to have.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, such emotional responses are similarly guided by an allopsychic goal of T: John espouses his daughter’s goal to win; Afra espouses Tara’s goal not to be harmed. This corresponds to a general dependency of emotional dispositions on agents’ goals. Consider fear: being intent on keeping a relationship intact, aiming to pass an exam, and wanting to avoid appearing to be a stereotypical blond are all goals that may ground dispositions to be afraid and hence feed into an agent’s treating certain facts as reasons for fear.

### 5.b. Disanalogies with action

The grounding of emotional responses, and of the reasons for those responses, in agents’ goals is familiar to everyday understanding. However, there are two important disanalogies between action and the emotion cases which can easily obscure this structural commonality.

The first is that emotional responding never has the instrumental structure characteristic of paradigm cases of acting for reasons. A’s emoting does not entail that A take her emoting to be necessary or conducive to the realization of a goal. Indeed, emoting, whether on someone else’s behalf or not, does not require thinking about the emotion at all. Rather, what is required is merely that A take some fact to have immediate goal-relative significance. It follows that, where A emotes

<sup>15</sup>Jollimore also points out the tendency to parallel emotional and practical responses on behalf of one’s friends (Jollimore, 2021, 14711).

<sup>16</sup>It has been argued that the considerations that provide normative support for emotions should not be conceptualised as reasons (Maguire, 2018). In the following, I shall assume that Maguire’s worries can be assuaged. For an attempt to do so, see Ward, 2022.

<sup>17</sup>As has been argued persuasively (Müller, 2017; Naar, 2022), this fact sits uneasily with the standard theory according to which emotions are evaluative (quasi-)perceptions: we do not perceive for reasons.

on behalf of some T, what is required is the satisfaction of an equivalent of the first condition of AOB/1. We simply replace the action token variable  $\phi$  with an emotion token variable.

The second disanalogy concerns the cognitive relation of an agent to her reasons in the action and the emotion cases. In the action case, it has generally been assumed that the reasons for which people act are the objects of their beliefs. An agent, it may seem, needs to believe that p is a—normative—reason for her to  $\phi$  in order for p to play the role of a motivating reason. Whether or not this is true for action—and, again, spontaneous expressive actions are grounds for skepticism—it is certainly not true for emotions. It seems clear that emotions are often triggered by mere perceptions.<sup>18</sup> But if this is the case, it may seem implausible that people emote for reasons in the same way that they act for reasons.

The challenge here is to explain the basing relation, that is, the relation between the adoption of an attitude and its cognitive base. For the purposes of this paper, I shall adapt a proposal advanced by Lord and Sylvan as an analysis of the epistemic-basing relation. According to the proposal, treating a fact f as a normative reason for belief B involves being disposed to respond to f-like facts with B-like beliefs that are true, where the disposition counts as a kind of competence. More generally, treating as a normative reason for a response involves having the competence to respond in conformity with certain patterns that meet standards of success (Lord & Sylvan, 2019, 161ff.). Adapting the proposal for our purposes, we can say that facts are treated by an agent as normative reasons for particular emotions iff their responding to them in those ways is part of a competence-constitutive pattern of response which tends to generate emotions that are appropriate. John, for instance, tends to feel joy when things go as he had hoped or planned, and Afra tends to respond to dangerous situations with fear, rather than doing so with amusement.

Thus understood, treating a fact as a reason is a broader relation than that of taking or believing a fact to be a reason. Conversely, taking a fact to be a reason is an explicit way of treating it as a reason. The analysis of on behalfness should cover both belief and inexplicit treating, where the latter is plausibly at work both in emotional responding and in spontaneous expressive action. Hence, in order to generate a generic analysis of on behalfness, but also in order to get an inclusive concept of acting on behalf, AOB needs a further slight modification. In its first condition, “A takes some fact p ... to be a reason” is replaced by “A treats some fact p ... as a reason.”

Implementing this change, along with the substitution of AGE for AGA, leaves us with the following generic analysis of *responding on behalf*:

**(OB)**

A responds on behalf of T in  $p$ -ing iff:

1. A treats some fact p, in view of p's apparent relevance for the realisability of goal g, as a sufficient reason for her  $p$ -ing;
2. A espouses g because she believes g to be T's goal;
3. A  $ps$  for the reason that p, where that reason is grounded in the apparent realisability-relevance described in (1) and the allpsychic feature described in (2).

### 5.c. Emotions on behalf as ditransitive emotions

With these disanalogies out of the way, we can turn to the operation of allpsychic goal espousal in cases of emotional on behalfness. Returning to our cases, we can see the difference made by the guidance of a goal construed as the goal of the target. As in acting on behalf, this is not just a matter of A having a goal the content of which includes things going well for T. What, again, is decisive is that, in emoting, A is guided by the goal itself whilst construing it as T's. A, we can say again, takes on

<sup>18</sup>Compare Deonna & Teroni, 2012, 101.

T's goal under a mode of presentation that foregrounds T's first-person agential perspective on its realization. To get clear on the difference, compare:

(1OB) John is happy for his daughter that she has won the race.

(1P) Joe is happy that his daughter has won the race.

(2OB) Afra is afraid for Tara that the dog might bite her.

(2P) Avi is afraid that the dog might bite Tara.

We might think of 1OB and 2OB as describing *ditransitive emotions*, that is, as emotions with both a nominal and a propositional object. In contrast, 1P and 2P have purely propositional objects. The key difference is that the latter two emotions can be taken on for reasons for which the goals of the agents referred to in their contents are irrelevant. In 1P, Joe might, as it happens, be completely uninterested in whether his daughter wants to win the race, but be happy merely because she has outcompeted Jim's daughter; and in 2P, Avi's fear of the dog's bite might derive entirely from his own squeamishness at the sight of blood. In such cases, E's emoting is not being guided by a goal understood as a goal of T. Rather, a fact that in some way concerns another agent, and may or may not concern their goals, is taken to be relevant for some goal of the emoter and treated as a thus-grounded reason for her emotion.

## 6. On Behalfness in Action and Emotion

Where A acts or emotes on behalf of T, A is siding with T. Siding with someone by responding in line with an allopsychically espoused goal is a specific relation. It is not entailed by vicarious emoting in the sense of feeling the same affect as another because they are feeling it. If empathy is vicarious emoting in this sense, then an empathizer need not be feeling anything on behalf of the target. However, vicariously feeling what T is feeling is done on behalf of T where that feeling is guided by an allopsychically espoused goal of T. Moreover, on behalfness is not necessarily in play in sympathy, where A feels for T in the sense of feeling concerned about the endangering or curtailing of T's welfare. Of course, it is not unlikely that someone might feel sad on behalf of some target whilst also feeling sympathy with them. Such hybrid emotional phenomena are not uncommon; however, their elements can be taken apart.

Acting on behalf can, as we have seen, also be distinguished from phenomena that parallel those in the emotional sphere. An agent can act in order to ward off danger to a target's welfare. Such action may well also be carried out in order to attain a goal of T's. Where that goal is repelling a danger to T's own welfare, action aiming to benefit T will also be action on T's behalf. Moreover, A's acting to attain g herself because T is after g for himself is clearly not a case of action on behalf. In neither action nor emotion is mere imitation or orientation to the target's benefit sufficient for on behalfness.

That others are on our side in the sense grounded in AGE is often important to us. Note, though, that such siding with another can either be a fleeting matter that only picks up on a single, context-specific goal or it can go deep, being part-constitutive of our most intimate relationships.<sup>19</sup> Sue's handing down an item off a high supermarket shelf for the elderly customer might be a one-off with merely instrumental value for the target in the specific situation. However, friendship and love are relationships that require forms of on behalfness that are broader, deeper, and more robust.

They are *broader* in the sense that friends and lovers espouse a much higher number of their target's goals and are thus disposed to both feel and act for their targets in many more contexts. They are *deeper* in the sense that they involve recognition of where particular goals stand in the target's overall optative profile, that is, in the—broadly coherent—network in which a person's goals are

<sup>19</sup>Compare Helm, 2009, 49ff.; Helm, 2010, 157; Jollimore, 2021, 14711.



embedded. Such recognition tends to influence the precise contours of either action or emotion on behalf of T. It may add weight to the preferability of certain ways of being guided by a particular goal. It may also impose restrictions on how A is guided by a goal of T's. A might know that T wants his (T's) daughter D to give up base jumping and thus attempt to persuade D to change her sporting preferences. However, knowing that T abhors threatening behavior, A will avoid methods of persuasion that involve such threats. In contrast, Mr. Busybody, who has learned of the conflict, might threaten D in order to achieve T's aim. This would count as a case of unwanted action on behalf of T, and clearly not one that meets the standards of friendship. A is likely to respond to such an intervention with the same indignation as T on the basis of A's espousal of the relevant conjunction of T's goals.

Finally, forms of on behalfness constitutive of friendship and love tend to be *more robust* than many other forms of on behalfness because of the depth and breadth of their embedding in A's own optative profile. A goal espoused because it is possessed by a loved one is likely to be connected with further goals of A's, both allopsychic and others. Even if a specific allopsychic goal g is one to which A is not strongly attached, other relevant goals are likely to be such that it would be difficult for A to shed them. Relevant goals are those to which g is instrumental or which are further facets of a general orientation of which g is a part.

It is worth noting that robustness of on behalfness can come apart from its breadth and depth. Institutional on behalfness is a case in point. Lawyers are mandated to pursue one goal, or a highly restricted set of goals, on behalf of their clients. Moreover, those goals need not cohere with other of the lawyers' goals: lawyers can advocate for clients whose goals they seriously disapprove of. However, the formalization of procedures and their financial, legal and otherwise institutional support generally furnish the pursuit of the client's goals with a firm and persistent structure. That is precisely the point of the institutional design. It is no coincidence that this robust form of action on behalf also comes apart from emotional on behalfness.

There can, in general, be wide gaps between cases in which people act and emote on behalf of others. On the one hand, as we can decide to act on behalf of others for institutional, financial or other instrumental reasons, action on behalf is not tied to dispositions to emotional on behalfness. Conversely, responding emotionally on behalf of others is generally tied to goals that have not just been adopted through a decision, but which are more firmly embedded in the agent's optative profile. Such goals can be generated through friendship, can result from shared socialisation or can be features of a general stance towards conspecifics, such as an aversion to suffering or to injustice. Action on behalf is thus in a sense cheap, as it can be performed for almost anyone; it is, of course, also costly in the sense that it requires the agent to actually do things. In contrast, emotion on behalf is easy to come by, in as far as it can come and go without requiring decisions or explicit behavior; but, as it also has stronger psychological presuppositions, it is in a sense also more exacting.

Humans generally act and feel on behalf of each other in various ways. As we have seen, there has been important work on political representation that looks at a specific, highly regulated variant of the phenomenon. Work on friendship and love has picked out a very different variant.<sup>20</sup> The contention of this article has been that the key grounding structure at work in these cases, as in many

<sup>20</sup>Bennett Helm's work is particularly prominent. Helm has argued convincingly that love involves assigning the loved one particular import, which in turn is a matter of making oneself susceptible to a whole gamut of interrelated emotional responses to whatever impacts the loved one's wellbeing. This can, as Helm says, result in a husband feeling anxious "on behalf of" his wife (Helm, 2009, 48; Helm, 2010, 157). Much of what Helm says is compatible with the view sketched here. Two differences are worth noting: first, Helm's holistic view seems to preclude an explanation of the instantiation of the "commitment" inherent in patterns of emotional response. The view sketched here claims that what is behind such a commitment – and constitutes the agential feature suggested by active-sounding talk of "commitment" – is allogenic goal espousal. Second, Helm sees the assignation of import through such commitment as targeting the other's "wellbeing", where wellbeing is an inclusive matter, which does not distinguish between, for instance, need fulfilment and goal satisfaction. In contrast, I have been arguing that these are two separate ideas and that we should think of on behalfness as aiming at the latter, rather than the former.

less obtrusive everyday phenomena of doing and feeling for, is that of allopsychic goal espousal. It is this structure that gives certain forms of affective empathy the import we take them to have. Another feeling what we feel—or would have felt if we'd thought the issue through—is frequently valuable to us because their doing so indicates that they are on our side. How valuable it is to us will depend both on our relationship with the other and on the feeling's object. However, the fact that emotions tend to depend on goals that are more broadly, deeply, and robustly embedded in our personalities frequently makes another's emoting on our behalf a unique source of comfort and support. Returning to the starting point of our discussion: a conclusive argument against empathy's importance for morality would have to show that this type of interpersonal value is morally insignificant.

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