

Reading Questions for September 8

These questions cover Michael Slote's article, "Famine, Affluence, and Empathy." The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to do the reading more than once to get the answers.

1. Slote thinks that his understanding of the ethics of care makes two improvements to the idea of the ethics of care originally proposed by Nodding. The first change is in regards to relationships at a distance. The other is his incorporating the idea of empathy. Explain the original idea Nodding proposed, the two changes Slote makes, and why he thinks each of them is an improvement. Do you agree with him? Why?
2. Slote says on page 551 that thinks that the notion of empathy can help us sort out our intuitive reactions to cases like the drowning case and the famine case. How does Slote think that the notion of empathy helps explain and justify our intuitions about this case? Do you think he is right? Why?
3. Slote distinguishes between partialist and impartialist understandings of morality (see page 554). What does he mean by this distinction? Which sort of understanding of morality do you think is best, partialist or impartialist? Why?
4. What does Slote ultimately conclude regarding the issue of famine relief and why does he conclude this?