



# Compassion

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April 6, 13, 20, 27  
3 - 4:30 p.m.

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## Course Plan and Outline

- April 6: Introduction: *The Three Mountains*. The Problem of defining compassion, love, and other emotions. The critique of compassion. Application: Intrusive Compassion.
- April 13: Compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and justice. Theological Implications. Social justice and distributive justice. Applications: racial justice, immigration, etc.
- April 20: How far does compassion extend? Cosmopolitan compassion and the expanding circle. Application: nonhuman animals.
- April 27: Problem: "compassion fatigue." Self-compassion. Stimulating compassion. Nature, Art, Literature, and Religion. Application: education/training for compassion.

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## The Ethics Center

<http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/ethicscenter/>

- Facebook: @FresnoEthicsCenter
- Youtube Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjOKzXxhqDstH73nE3-YauA>
- Thursday, April 22
  - 9-10:00 AM: Islam and Nonviolence
    - Dr. Tom Woerner-Powell, University of Manchester
    - Dr. Amine Tais, Fresno State
    - Dr. Veena Howard, Fresno State
  - 3:30-5:00 PM: Youth Dialogue about Race in the Central Valley
    - Mr. Brandon Gridiron, Visalia Unified School District
    - Youth Voices, including Elizabeth Rocha Zuñiga, Fresno State ASI President
    - With Fresno's Civic Education Center

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## Measuring/Extending Compassion

How much, how often, how far?

- Is compassion a brief state = an episodic experience?
- Or can compassion become a habit/disposition/virtue = an enduring responsiveness?
- How long does compassion last? How long should it last?
  - Cf. compassion fatigue: when compassionate arousal lasts too long...
- How widely can/should compassion extend?
  - From self to neighbor? To strangers? To all sentient beings?
  - Is there a difference between compassion for those who we know and compassion for those we don't know?
  - Is it even really possible to extend compassion to those we don't know?

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## Nussbaum: Shared Vulnerability

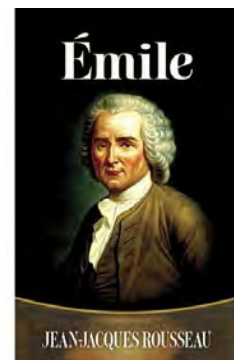
- The recognition of one's own related vulnerability is, then an important and frequently an indispensable epistemological requirement for compassion in human beings... It is most often on the basis of a sense of shared vulnerability to pain that we extend our sympathy.



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## The Problem of Distance: Not Understanding the Suffering of “The Other”

- Rousseau: “Why are kings without pity for their subjects? Because they count on never being human beings. Why are the rich so hard on the poor?”
- It is because they have no fear of being poor.”  
(*Emile*)



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## Sources

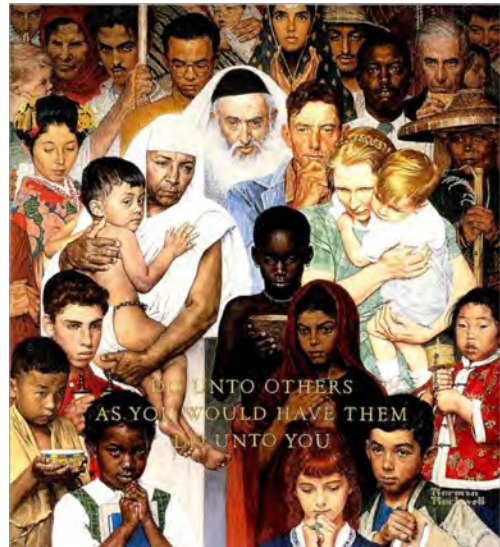
- Evolutionary/Scientific
- Buddhist
- Christian



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## Golden Rule(s)

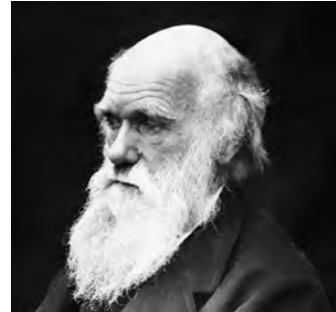
- Put yourself in the other's shoes
- Love your neighbor as yourself
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
- John Hick: "All the great traditions teach the moral ideal of generous good will, love, compassion, epitomized in the Golden Rule."



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## Evolution of Compassion Darwin on “Sympathy” (*Descent of Man 1871*)

- In however complex a manner this feeling may have originated, as it is one of high importance to all those animals which aid and defend one another, it will have been increased through natural selection; for those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring.



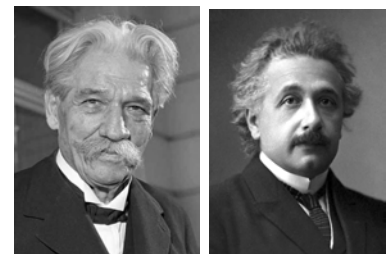
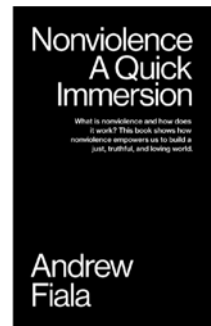
Charles Darwin  
1809-1882

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## Fiala, *Nonviolence: A Quick Immersion*

Albert Einstein, who was an ardent pacifist, supposedly said in a widely-quoted passage that we need to look beyond the delusion of our separateness and that **“our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”**

Another famous Albert, the pacifist doctor Albert Schweitzer, suggested that we ought to expand the circle of compassion under the rubric of “reverence for life. Schweitzer explained that **“the circle of ethics always grows wider, and ethics becomes more profound... The circle described by ethics is always widening.”**



Albert Schweitzer  
1875 -1965

Albert Einstein  
1879 -1955

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## The Evolution of Compassion

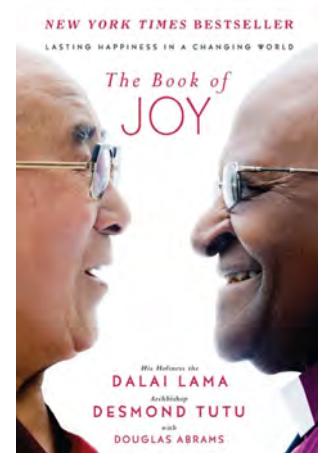
- Compassion evolved as a distinct affective experience whose primary function is to facilitate cooperation and protection of the weak and those who suffer.
- Compassion emerged, this reasoning holds, as a distinct affective state and trait because it enhances the welfare of vulnerable offspring, because it is a desirable emotion or attribute in mate selection processes, and because it enables cooperative relations with non-kin.
  - Jennifer Goetz, et al. "Compassion: an evolutionary analysis and empirical review." *Psychological bulletin* (2010)



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## Douglas Abrams, *The Book of Joy*

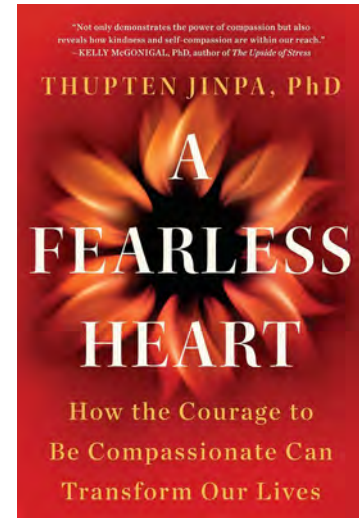
- When we help others, we often experience what has been called the "helper's high," as endorphins are released in our brain, leading to a euphoric state. The same reward centers of the brain seem to light up when we are doing something compassionate as when we think of chocolate. The warm feeling we get from helping others comes from the release of oxytocin, the same hormone that is released by lactating mothers.
- This hormone seems to have health benefits, including the reduction of inflammation in the cardiovascular system. Compassion literally makes our heart healthy and happy.
- Compassion also seems to be contagious. When we see others being compassionate, we are more likely to be compassionate. Experiments with large numbers of people show that if you are kind and compassionate, your friends, your friends' friends, and even your friends' friends' friends are more likely to become kind and compassionate.



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## Tibetan Buddhist Prayer Thupten Jinpa

- *May all beings have happiness.*
- *May they all be free of suffering.*
- *May they all be happy and without suffering.*
- *May they all remain in equanimity, calm and free from bias, attachment, and aversion.*
  - Jinpa, *A Fearless Heart*



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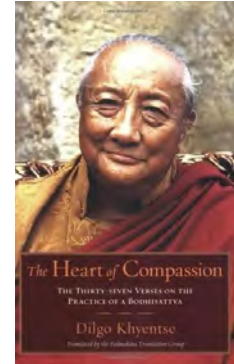
## Four Unlimited Goods Cf. Buddhist "Four Immeasurables" Immeasurable because never too much

- Love: to want others to be happy (benevolence)
- Compassion: to want others to be free from suffering (sympathy)
- Sympathetic joy: to enjoy the happiness of others (community)
- Calm equanimity: to be free of clinging anxiety suffering (peace)
- Vs.
  - Hate: to want the other to be unhappy (malevolence)
  - Cruelty: to want the other to suffer (hostility)
  - Envy, Jealousy, Misery: to be unhappy (discontent)
  - Anxiety: to suffer (agitation)

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# The Boddhicitta Intention

If all the mothers who have loved me since beginningless time are suffering,  
 What's the use of my own happiness?  
 So, with the aim of liberating limitless sentient being,  
 To set my mind on enlightenment is the practice of a bodhisattva.

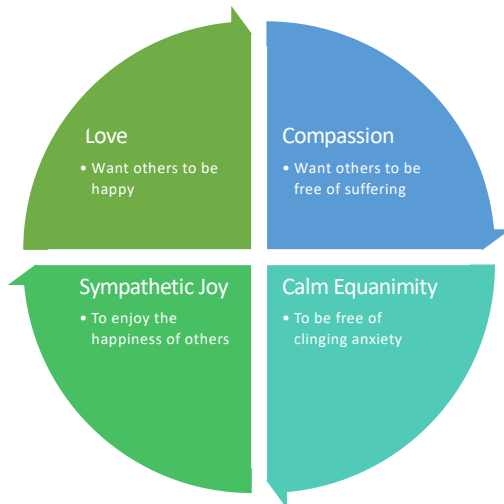


Dilgo Khyentse, *The Heart of Compassion*

Translation and commentary: "The Thirty-Seven Verses on the Practice of a Bodhisattva," a text composed by Gyalse Ngulchu Thogme

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# Expanding Circles and Cycles of Compassion



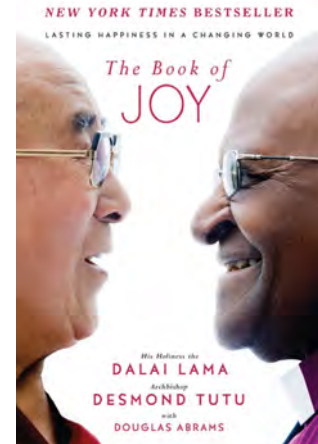
<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/bs-s15.htm>

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## Dalai Lama: Compassion for Enemies?

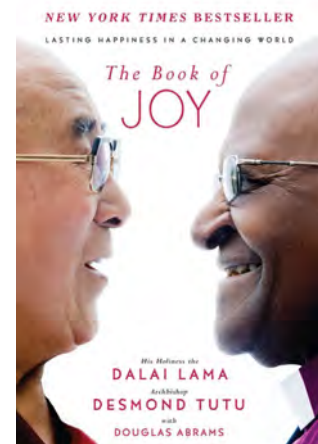
- We need unbiased love toward entire humanity, entire sentient beings, irrespective of what their attitude is toward us. So your enemies are still human brothers and sisters, so they also deserve our love, our respect, our affection. That's unbiased love.
- You might have to resist your enemies' actions, but you can love them as brothers and sisters. Only we human beings can do this with our human intelligence. Other animals cannot do this.



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## Dalai Lama: Compassion for Enemies?

- You must not hate those who do harmful things,” the Dalai Lama has explained. “The compassionate thing is to do what you can to stop them—for they are harming themselves as well as those who suffer from their actions.”



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## *Christian Agape* = self-less love

### The Three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, Love

- "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22: 36-40)
- Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things... So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians, Chapter 13)

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## Christian: "God is love"

- Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; **for God is love.**
- In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4: 7-16)

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## Buddhist Compassion and Christian Love Compared (by Luke Perera)

- *Bodhicitta* and charity each involve a firm intention, which should become a habitual disposition, to show active love and compassion to other beings. This benevolence should be universal in scope: For Mahayana Buddhists, it is as wide and enduring as the realm of sentient beings; for Catholic-Christians, it should take on, within human limits, the dimensions of the love of God for his creation. They produce similar attitudes (generosity, concern for the welfare of others, renunciation of self) and inspire similar concrete actions (praying for others, giving teaching and spiritual counsel, care for the sick and misfortunate, and so on).
- In simple, schematic terms we can say that bodhicitta and charity both have a dual aim: They unite the highest religious goal (attaining bodhi, love for God) with concern for the welfare of the world.

- Luke Perera, "Bodhicitta" and Charity: A Comparison" *Buddhist-Christian Studies* Vol. 35 (2015), pp. 121-146.

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## A Distinction? Buddhist v. Christian

- Christian love mediated through God
  - Love God and your neighbor
  - Loving God through loving your neighbor
  - A gift of grace: from God
- Buddhist compassion achieved by recognition of common suffering
  - Emptiness and non-self—lead to compassion
  - Compassion leads to insight of emptiness and non-self
  - An insight/capacity developed through practice



NO SELF



NO PROBLEM

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## Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (*We are All Brothers or Brothers All*)

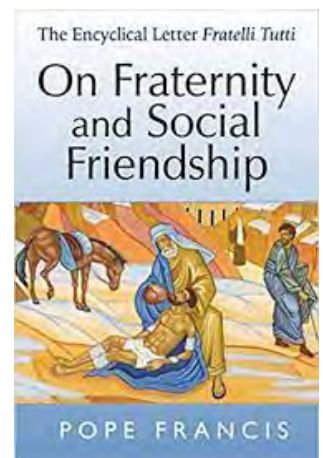
- Love does not care if a brother or sister in need comes from one place or another. For love shatters the chains that keep us isolated and separate; in their place, it builds bridges. Love enables us to create one great family, where all of us can feel at home...
- Love exudes compassion and dignity.
- If the music of the Gospel ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth.



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## Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (*We are All Brothers or Brothers All*)

- The parable of the Good Samaritan eloquently presents the basic decision we need to make in order to rebuild our wounded world. In the face of so much pain and suffering, our only course is to imitate the Good Samaritan. Any other decision would make us either one of the robbers or one of those who walked by without showing compassion for the sufferings of the man on the roadside. The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbors, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good.



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## King's Structural Interpretation of the Good Samaritan

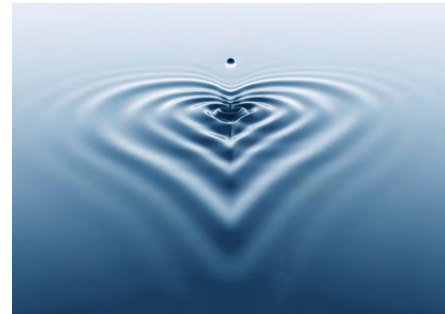
- On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway.
- True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.
- Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.
  - Martin Luther King, Jr., "Beyond Vietnam" April 4, 1967



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## Implications?

- Cosmopolitan Compassion
- Animal Compassion

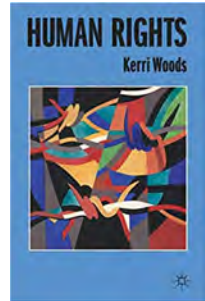


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## Implications: Cosmopolitan Compassion

- A shared sense of vulnerability is crucial to the operation of sentiment directing an agent toward solidarity and compassion rather than greater distance and contempt.
- *Our obligations to distant others... are not a function of our having harmed them, but rather arise from a solidaristic response to the suffering of others.*

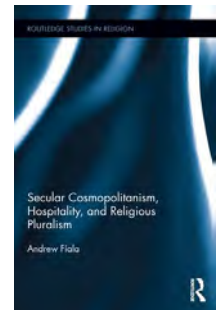
- Kerri Woods, "Whither Sentiment? Compassion, Solidarity, and Disgust in Cosmopolitan Thought" *Journal of Social Philosophy*. 2012;43(1):33-49.



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## Implications: Cosmopolitan Compassion Fiala, *Secular Cosmopolitanism*

- Cosmopolitanism is curious and compassionate: it inquires and engages, hoping to understand and embrace at least part of the amazing plurality of human experience.
- The imperative of hospitality is this: open your doors to strangers and welcome them into your home. Related to this is a close corollary: be a good guest. Good hosts and good guests are curious and compassionate without being critical. A cosmopolitan can be at home anywhere, provided she is curious, compassionate, and uncritical.



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## Implications: Animal Compassion

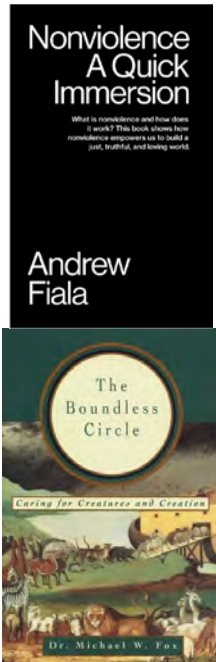


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## Implications: Animal Compassion Michael W. Fox, *The Boundless Circle*

- "The modern hero is surely one who actively affirms ahimsa in both professional and personal realms and, rather than remaining passive or indifferent toward the myriad crimes of violence against creatures and Creation, seeks every means to expand the principle of compassionate protection of all life where it is needed...

It is not a question of drawing some arbitrary line as to which creatures and to what extent we should exploit them. Rather, **we should draw a circle, a boundless circle of compassion to include all creatures and Creation within the scope of our respect and reverence."**



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## Implications: Animal Compassion Pythagoras and the Neo-Platonists

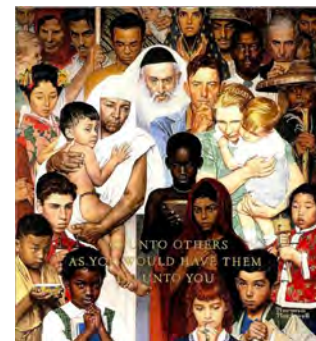
- Pythagoras likewise ordained abstinence from animal food, for many other reasons, and likewise because it is productive of peace. For those who are accustomed to abominate the slaughter of animals as iniquitous and preternatural, will think it to be much more unlawful to kill a man, or engage in war.
  - Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* (Chapter 30)
- Since animals are allied to us, if it should appear, according to Pythagoras, that they are allotted the same soul that we are, he may justly be considered as impious who does not abstain from acting unjustly towards his kindred.
  - Porphyry, *On Abstaining from Animal Food* (Book 3)



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## Conclusions

- Deep questions about how much and how broad compassion extends
- Multiple Sources for Compassion: Evolutionary Theory, Buddhism, Christianity
- What do we do with compassion?
  - Vegetarianism?
  - Rescue for emergencies?
- MLK: *true compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.*



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