



In Defense of Sentimentality (Passionate Life)

Robert C. Solomon

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Philosophy has as much to do with feelings as it does with thoughts and thinking. Philosophy, accordingly, requires not only emotional sensitivity but an understanding of the emotions, not as curious but marginal psychological phenomena but as the very substance of life. In this, the second book in a series devoted to his work on the emotions, Robert Solomon presents a defense of the emotions and of sentimentality against the background of what he perceives as a long history of abuse in philosophy and social thought and art and literary criticism. The title piece reopens a classic debate about the role of sentimentality in art and literature. In subsequent chapters, Solomon discusses not only such "moral sentiments" as sympathy and compassion but also grief, gratitude, love, horror, and even vengeance. He also defends, with appropriate caution, the "seven deadly sins." The emotions, at least some emotions--are essential to a well-lived life. They are or can be virtues, features of the human condition without which civilized life would be unimaginable.

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