Kant’s derogatory comments about “inclination” and “affect” have long led some readers to believe that he holds emotions to be troublesome and deleterious to morality, so the stated goal of this volume is to demonstrate that Kant does in fact have “an important and philosophically rich account of the emotions” (1). Even more than that, this volume contains examples of ground-breaking work that convincingly challenges long-held biases, giving the Kantian position better standing in contemporary debates.

The book begins with three reprints of foundational articles from prominent “foremothers” of scholarship on Kant’s theory of emotion: Marcia Baron, Nancy Sherman, and Christine Korsgaard. Baron’s contribution presents the best general overview of the role that feeling plays in Kantian ethics and pedagogy, and this essay is especially well-suited for non-specialists. Baron also examines whether virtuous feelings in themselves matter for a moral theory or only insofar as they translate into behaviors, arguing convincingly that Kant takes the former position.

While Sherman points to many important passages from Kant in the service of demonstrating that he does indeed believe that it is necessary to cultivate what he calls an emotionally “sensitive” character, her less than generous interpretation of Kantian ethics, as well as the primacy given to her own account of emotion, skews her conclusions about the role emotion plays in virtue for Kant.

Korsgaard’s analysis of the sympathy passage from the Groundwork adds to the growing confidence that this passage can be defended, and her comparison between Aristotle and Kant is illuminating. She argues that natural sympathy is akin to what Aristotle terms natural virtue, but for Kant it is merely a substitute for virtue that is replaced by genuine moral motivation. To my mind, she misses the fact that Kant does in fact hold that acting dutifully with feeling is better than acting without feeling, but aside from that, the question that she raises about the relative value of acting merely from feeling is interesting and important for further inquiry.

Deimling, Frierson, and Kleingeld succeed in making Kant relevant to contemporary debates in other fields. Similarly, Grenberg offers a convincing Kantian defense of skepticism about love, and especially self-love, in the face of other ethicists, like Frankfurt, who exalt love as the highest virtue.

Deimling argues that like many contemporary theorists of emotion, such as Nussbaum or Prinz, Kant holds that emotions track values. She outlines the
ways Kant holds that we can influence our emotions both immediately and mediately; this also suggests that Kant's theory incorporates elements from both physiological and cognitive approaches.

Kleingeld aims to put Kantianism in conversation with contemporary empirical moral psychology. She responds to Greene's argument that research subjects give deontological answers more quickly and hence those answers are actually based on emotion, not reason. There are many ways to respond to this invalid and question-begging inference, including with a deeper discussion of Kant's theory of moral feeling and “the fact of reason,” and Kleingeld's patient attempt to put two very different theoretical approaches in communication with each other is virtuous. As she suggests, we Kantians often do need to do a better job being willing to defend ourselves to the wider philosophical community.

Frierson's, perhaps radical, notion of affective normativity is sure to generate discussion. He argues that for Kant in addition to epistemic and volitional normativity—rules governing knowledge and behavior—there is also affective normativity, that is, a particular way we should feel that is not reducible to the other two modes of normativity. Frierson's argument is even more of a feat because he positions it alongside the fact that Kant takes feelings to be subjective. Of course, feelings are also subjected to epistemic and volitional normativity—and perhaps even more so. Furthermore, Frierson holds that for Kant feelings can be caused by epistemic and volitional normative judgments. Nevertheless, his stated goal here is to establish a realm of exclusive affective normativity. The distinction between feelings as “mental representations” and cognitions, as well as Frierson's conclusion overall, is most plausible in the case of aesthetic pleasure (170). It is difficult for me to judge whether or not aesthetic taste should really count as normative; just as the beautiful object is purposive without a purpose, being non-conceptual, perhaps its pleasure is normative without a norm.

Merritt, with her contribution “Kant on the Pleasures of Understanding,” asks whether or not Kant believes that we have a natural desire to gain knowledge and thereby natural pleasure occasioned by at least some of the operations of the understanding. Given Kant’s consistent focus on the development of knowledge (cultivation, education, self-perfection, enlightenment, etc.), it is surprising that so few have considered this question, and it is this kind of refocusing that is helping to advance Kant scholarship. She argues here that Kant takes the workings of “judgment”—the creative using of one's mind to solve problems, make connections, etc.—to be pleasurable, but we often lose sight of these everyday pleasures of learning and thinking. She argues that the pleasure of beauty for Kant helps us to remind us of what she calls “epistemic