One of the central concerns of the Center for Humans and Nature is the concept of “ecological democratic citizenship.” In our work we attempt to define, clarify, and critically assess this notion, both by examining its philosophical underpinnings in ethics and political theory and by exploring its practical and political implications in America and the world today.

Many thinkers from numerous disciplines are doing work pertinent to the constellation of knowledge and sensibility implied by this notion, which lies at the intersection of ecological science, civic responsibility, and democratic governance. One of the most interesting and important of such thinkers is the widely read philosopher, Martha Nussbaum. Among her prolific writings, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (2001), is particularly noteworthy for this purpose. In it Nussbaum seeks to outline the philosophical and psychological components that would contribute to the healthy functioning of a pluralistic, democratic society. *Upheavals* is a spellbinding exploration of emotions across the history of Western thought beginning with Plato and ending with Joyce. Nussbaum’s reading of philosophy and literature draws the reader on page after page until you simply must step back from the feast.

Nussbaum begins by rehabilitating the role of emotions as important cognitive forces in our lives. Part of the exploration is an exposition of the course of her intense grief at the death of her mother. Indeed, grief generates the title of the book. She tells us that her grief for her mother heaves itself up unexpectedly, not only into her dreams, but also into her conscious thought where, even though unbidden, it is fully cognitive. She compares her experience with the huge literature on emotions and interestingly includes a discussion of emotions in animals. She reviews the benefits and problems of the various scientific approaches to the study of emotion and compares emotion in various cultures. A particularly moving chapter deals with the fact that music cannot be put into words and yet is profoundly cognitive and often intrudes itself into other thoughts. Nussbaum compellingly demonstrates that emotions play a central role in our cognitive world.

Nussbaum characterizes her philosophy as neo-Stoic. Traditional Stoics recognize the emotions as part of our cognitive world but find these upheavals of thought profoundly disruptive to their quest for a strict focus on a rational ascent toward higher meanings. Thus, the Stoics work hard to suppress their emotions whether those of anger, hate, or disgust or those of infatuation, love, or generosity. Stoics reason that generosity, whether by an individual or institution, demeans both giver and recipient. It does so because it suggests that they are not truly focused on the realm of contemplative thought and thus have failed fully to recognize worldly things as transient and without...
real importance (cf. pp. 355; 406-7, on Justice Clarence Thomas as a contemporary example of classical Stoicism).

By contrast, Nussbaum's brand of neo-Stoic philosophy is concerned with an earthly version of eudaimonia, the good life for individual and community. Emotions, in her neo-Stoicism, can lead toward (love, compassion) or away from (disgust, shame) eudaimonia. At the heart of the citizenship question for Nussbaum is the development of our emotional palette from infancy through childhood and into adulthood. Here once again she employs vivid experiences from her own life as well as from the psychiatric literature. Her conclusions are two. The wrong kind of upbringing is one in which the child is always in error, has no way of making reparation, and thus is never secure in love; this leads to a person whose pre-eminent adult emotions become disgust and shame and the need to control oneself and one's environment as strictly as possible. Citizens of this sort are not likely to produce a democratic, pluralistic, egalitarian society. By contrast, a child who learns to trust that separation can end in reunion, that errors can be rectified or repaired and can lead to instruction and reparation—this child can learn to love herself and others and not be overcome by disgust. Children so raised and educated can be compassionate and tolerant members of a democratic society.

Next Nussbaum turns to a careful review of the idea of compassion, using a dialogue form of exposition. She concludes that compassion is the appropriate, perhaps the only, foundation for the life of the community. But compassion requires a moral and civic education; that is to say, it doesn't just happen. For instance, compassion involves imagination and narrative in relating to victims and agents. Going further, Nussbaum proposes a list of “The Central Human Capabilities” which might arise from and be nurtured by an education for compassion. These include Life; Bodily Health; Bodily Integrity; Senses, Imagination and Thought; Emotions; Practical Reason; Affiliation; Other Species; Play; and Control over One’s Environment (political and material). According to her theory of compassionate development at the societal level, “every society ought to guarantee its citizens a threshold level” of these capacities (p. 416-418). For Nussbaum, compassion provides a rationale and basis for personal judgements, welfare, child development, and criminal justice.

In the final part of the book, Nussbaum takes us on a delightful, but very purposeful ramble through philosophical and literary works in search of the definition of eudaimonia, implied or explicit in each. This is a study of the ascent of love as illustrated by many authors, i.e., the pathways of concern and attention held highest and best by a given worldview. In this study, Nussbaum continually imagines two main characters of Marcel Proust's In Search of Lost Time, Marcel and Albertine, as the experiencers or questioners of the proposed ascent to eudaimonia. We see their pathways, what they gain, and what they have left behind or outside of consideration as Nussbaum describes the ascent of love in not only in Proust's work, but also in Plato, Spinoza, Augustine, Dante, and others. All of the above accounts of the ascent of love are hampered by their concentration on another world or world-to-come. This direction of attention is all important as it mandates that the proponents are drawn away from compassionate action in the here-and-now and may even be taught to ignore this-worldly obligations as obstacles to attending to the most elevated (proper) concerns.

Nussbaum turns next to Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë as an example of the Romantic ascent of love. Here we see that the destructive properties of shame and rejection mixed with towering erotic desire leave no room for compassion of any sort even between the lovers, let alone anyone else. But Nussbaum puts forth another version of the romantic ascent of love, that found in the music and poetry of Mahler's symphonies. These, together with Whitman's poetry and Joyce's Ulysses, provide for Nussbaum a glimpse of the possibilities of a compassion focused on the messiness, complexities, ambiguities, struggles, and joys of the here-and-now. Individuals showing compassion for other individuals, their strengths and foibles, is where a compassionate society can begin and where it has its best chance to become rooted. But a compassionate society is a complex goal and compassion for individuals does not yet guarantee success for the community.

Nussbaum presents a major theme of philosophy in a way that keeps you at the edge of your chair. What additionally draws my interest is that Nussbaum's approach and many of her examples might be conscripted to explore the descents and ascents of our human relationships with nature. For example, we could take the sources cited and ask of them the question “While love ascended (according
to a particular author), did caring for nature play a part in that, or was love for nature diminished or entirely denied either by intent or omission?” Put another way, how are we aided or hindered by a particular philosophy or psychology in our attempts to understand what a compassionate humans-and-nature community entails? We might also perform the same sorts of analysis on the great ecologists and natural history writers including, for example, Darwin, Mayr, Gould, Jackson, and Berry. Can we use such analyses to envision a lively, compassionate, complex humans-and-nature community in which love, work, and mutual service come together?

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