A theme that has run through Martha Nussbaum’s writings is the rehabilitation of the emotions, not only within personal life, but within moral and political and legal thinking.\(^1\)

The input is cornucopian: from literature, philosophy, psychology, biology, ethology. The output is capacious. We cannot doubt that the project is immensely worthwhile in uniting so many spheres of enquiry and action under the banner of a retrieved humanity. Nussbaum is the St Joan not of an unworthy monarch, but of the human heart. Here I shall question her analysis of the emotions in *Upheavals of Thought*. This is motivated by the project of rehabilitation, but not – I shall suggest – required by it. In fact, it may be prudent to separate the end, which is a re-evaluation of the emotions, from the means, which is an account of their essence that may be contentious in a manner that is inessential to that end. (Nothing of what I am about to say about the emotions can be new to her, and little of it can be unwelcome; we differ not humanly about what they are like and what they are worth, but about how best to analyze them theoretically.)

What Nussbaum calls ‘the adversary’s view’ (25) is that emotions are blind forces often caused by external stimuli, but not directed at the world in accordance with conceptions of it; they are ‘unthinking energies that simply push the person around, without being hooked up to the ways in which she perceives or thinks about the world’ (24-5). She concedes that this appears to capture some of the phenomena, her feeling after her mother’s death ‘of terrible tumultuousness, of being at the mercy of currents that swept over [her] without [her] consent or complete understanding’ (26). Yet she objects,
surely rightly, that emotions have an intentionality: they are about the world, and relate intimately to conceptions of it and beliefs about it (27-8). She goes further. Even Plato and Aristotle, who accept that much, place most of the emotions within a stratum of the soul lower than reason, that is, lower than the beliefs and desires that most reliably capture and respect facts and values. Nussbaum urges that, once we comprehend the richness of the concepts and propositional contents that constitute the emotions, we must cease to relegate them from the bridge to the steerage of the ship of the soul. She writes, ‘We could say that there is a separate emotional part of the soul that has all these abilities. But we seem to have lost our grip on the reason for housing grief in a separate noncognitive part: thought looks like just the place to house it’ (44). The battle in the imperfectly stoical soul between grief and reason is not a tug-of-war between a ‘mindless emotional part’ that ‘is doing the grieving’, and a ‘reason’ that ‘is thinking philosophical thoughts’, but ‘a debate between recognition and denial of the importance of the loss that has occurred’ (86).

So long as we hold fast to these two saving truths – that emotions are intentional, and often intelligent, states – we should only be in danger of lesser errors. But philosophy is a field, like nationalism, for the narcissism of small differences, and we may still debate how best to analyze the emotions even when we are allied in doing them justice. Nussbaum interprets her grief at losing her mother as identical to the following judgment: ‘My mother, an enormously valuable person and an important part of my life, is dead’ (76). She calls this pattern of analysis ‘neo-Stoic’.² The identification may well strike most of us as counter-intuitive. This response is likely to be heightened, as she concedes (22), by the candour of her description of her own case. We have all shared the
experience, ‘This news felt like a nail suddenly driven into my stomach’ (19). Yet, in her view, it is the very content of the judgment that gives it teeth: ‘The real, full recognition of that terrible event ... is the upheaval. It is as I described it: like putting a nail into your stomach ... Knowing can be violent, given the truths that are there to be known’ (45).

With admirable openness, Nussbaum not only highlights those felt features of emotional experience that may make her view, as she says herself, ‘seem very strange’ (22), but concedes the possibility of ‘a weaker or more hybrid view’, intermediate between hers and the adversary’s (33). One might make judgment sufficient for emotion, but not exhaustive of it: ‘We might even grant that judgment is a constituent element in the emotion, and, as a constituent element, a sufficient cause of the other elements as well, and yet insist that there are other elements, feelings and movements, that are not themselves parts of the judgment’ (44-5). More loosely, one might identify a case of grief not by necessary and sufficient conditions, but by ‘family resemblance’ to other instances of grieving, linked by a complex network of evaluations, and of ‘nonintentional feelings and sensations’ (76). Here, of course, one may well be influenced by Wittgenstein. Nussbaum’s reply is that while, during any episode of emotion, many other things may be going on as well, what holds together any emotion as a type is nothing but a single general judgment.

I shall later question the dichotomy between propositions that have intentional content, and ‘feelings and sensations’ that do not, in a way that may recast the Wittgensteinian view in a mode more to Nussbaum’s taste. In general, I do not see what is gained in this context by nothing-but-ery, and incline to diagnose her position as an over-reaction to the ‘adversary’ that takes the form it does for two reasons: it is partly
true, and she has a taste for heroism. (Mutato mutando, she invites a phrase that Robert Bridges applied to his bolder friend Gerald Manley Hopkins: anēr perittotatos, meaning a man of intellectual immoderation.)

Nussbaum’s focus upon one example – sorrow at a sudden bereavement – lends an unforgettable force to her account, and serves her well in illustrating an intimate link between two things that may be thought conceptually distinct: the grasp of a fact, and the onrush of a feeling. Yet its particularity, and lack of generality, are problematic. We are left asking: supposing that this is one form that grief can take, what is the essence of grief? When she writes, ‘What inspires grief is the death of someone beloved, someone who has been an important part of one’s own life’ (31), she restricts grief to bereavement, which suits her definitional strategy, but cannot be right. More abstract sketches of fear and anger (28-9) further exemplify her focus upon belief; yet they leave open what might constitute the essence of emotion as a genus. Does she suppose that emotion, and grief, and her grief – that is, not the token, but a specific type of grief – all have necessary and sufficient conditions that await conceptual analysis? She offers one very general characterization: ‘Emotions are forms of evaluative judgment that ascribe to things and persons outside a person’s own control great importance for the person’s own flourishing’ (22). Yet this is unpromising as a statement of necessary and sufficient conditions; one would hardly know which counter-example to take first. A different approach, more generally after Wittgenstein, would not presume that such conditions are always there to be found when a concept genuinely applies.

One general query arises from a different form of description. We often characterize an appropriate object of emotion by an adjective deriving from a verb, and this can enable
us to make fine distinctions. Within the sphere of the surprising, we can distinguish the startling, the bewildering, the astonishing, the amazing, and the staggering. There may be some verbal superfluity here, but there are also several real distinctions. (My immediate source is a German phrasebook that offers five different equivalents.) One primarily learns to distinguish these by observing or imagining different spontaneous reactions (some of which differ in kind, others only vaguely and in degree); to an extent, one can also distinguish different appropriate occasions. As our responses develop, they at once assume more refined forms, and discriminate more finely between different objects. What seems unpromising is a series of reductive analyses of the following form: to be startled/bewildered/astonished/amazed/staggered is fully to believe that one faces something startling/bewildering/astonishing/amazing/staggering. (On the other hand, it is fine to say that to be surprised by something is to find it surprising: this just registers the difference between an object or occasion, and a mere causal condition or contributing factor.)

Even if we do adopt a judgmental analysis of emotion, should an instance of emotion be identified with a single judgment? Here Nussbaum appears, un-Nussbaum-like, to vacillate. Of her claim that her grief was identical to the judgment ‘My mother, an enormously valuable person and an important part of my life, is dead’, she remarks, perhaps unkindly, ‘Of course, to put it this way is absurdly crude, and by now we can see that in reality we have on our hands not a single judgment, but a network of judgments at many levels of generality and specificity’ (76). Yet her response to the Wittgensteinian takes back what it can even of that taking-back: ‘My conclusion was that in any case I have many concrete judgments, not simply the gross and general judgment, “An
enormously valuable part of my life is gone.” But of course my concrete judgments entail that one, and that one is the one in terms of which I would wish to identify and define grief” (77). Her motive is clearly that, once we admit that an emotion is identified by a network of intentional states, none of them individually necessary or sufficient, we may well wish to be inclusive in the range of states, intentional and non-intentional, that we take to be criterial. 10

It is precisely in order to guarantee the emotivity of the constituent judgment that Nussbaum spells it out as ‘A person whom I deeply love, who is central to my life, has died’, and not ‘Betty Craven is dead’, or even ‘My mother is dead’ (41). Even so, she is aware of a possible space between judging and feeling. The issue is analogous to that of hard acrasia: the question ‘Can I – not generally, but on occasion – judge that I have lost someone who is deeply important to me without feeling grief?’ is like ‘Can I ever judge that much the best thing for me to do is x, and yet intentionally do y instead?’ Not infrequently, indeed, the two questions connect: though x may be for me normally an object of positive feeling and judgment, I may on occasion feel indifferent towards it, say through depression or exhaustion, or I may be emotionally drawn towards y, while remaining aware that doing x is a much better idea. Yet there may be a special difficulty with equating judgment and emotion: can a single evaluation both suffice for the existence of an emotion, and strike the subject as expressing it aptly? Nussbaum offers this formulation among others like it: ‘My mother, an enormously valuable person and an important part of my life, is dead’ (76). No doubt this is calculated to exclude two thoughts that might limit grief even at a mother’s death: a mother may be unmotherly (think of Electra’s métēr amētōr, ‘mother who is no mother’, Sophocles, Electra 1154);
and even a good mother may become marginal to the life of an absent or grown-up child.\textsuperscript{11} And yet, as an expression of grief, the formulation appears doubtfully felicitous. We don’t want any implication that one can only grieve for supposed saints or VIP’s. (Saying ‘She was a wonderful mother’ less equivocally expresses grief if it doesn’t also state a judgment – though the loss may be magnified if she merits the accolade.) Nor do we want, or want to be, mourners for whom the thought that drives the nail into the stomach is ‘An important part of my life is over’: that seems too egocentric.\textsuperscript{12} Hence attempting to reduce the emotion to a belief sufficient to entail it risks distancing it from any form of words by which it would be apt – if I may apply a concept central in Wittgenstein – to avow it.\textsuperscript{13}

What is likely to move one most after a bereavement is not the abstract and self-centered thought that might constitute an awareness of one’s own loss, but any concrete memory or reminder that abruptly brings back, while the wound is raw, the ipseity of the person loved and lost. Proust well illustrates this in his description of Marcel’s delayed response to his grandmother’s death in the section of \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} titled ‘les intermittences du cœur’ (‘the intermittencies of the heart’).\textsuperscript{14} In a sensitive discussion, Nussbaum fully recognizes this aspect of the occasions of emotion, and moots saying this: ‘Grief is the acceptance of a certain content, \textit{accompanied (usually) by} relevant acts of the imagination’ (66). Yet she concludes, ‘This feature should probably not be added to the definition of emotions, since it exhibits such great variability and plasticity’ (67).\textsuperscript{15} Yet when no adequate definition of grief has been offered, any comparison between aspects in respect of ‘variability and plasticity’ seems unsafe. Moreover, there is no argument that an emotion is definable by a set of necessary and
sufficient conditions, all of which any instance must satisfy, rather than being a *syndrome*, definable only by reference to characteristic aspects that vary between cases. Thus the *COD* defines ‘migraine’ as follows: ‘a recurrent throbbing headache that usually affects one side of the head, often accompanied by nausea and disturbance of vision’.

Would Nussbaum infer that, if there can be no more precise definition, migraine is an illusory category?

She has other things to say in defence of her approach: when we apparently have the pertinent belief but not the emotion, perhaps ‘the knowledge of the evaluative significance of the death has not yet sunk in’ (40); or ‘the knowledge is still being kept at bay’ (41). Yet such ways of speaking are ambiguous. If they signify that the subject has not truly appreciated that, or how, he has grounds for an emotion, they are inadequate to the case. (Marcel hadn’t lacked *knowledge* that a person central to his life was dead.) If they rather signify that the subject’s appreciation is too narrowly cognitive, *rather than emotive*, they are more explanatory – but do not support a narrowly epistemic analysis of the emotions. We might enrich the bare concept of *assent*, adding Richard Wollheim’s richer notion of *acceptance*. What may be sufficient for the emotion is if I do not merely assent to an appropriate proposition, but let it register and reverberate throughout my being – which means more than with all my reason (whether in the conscious application of concepts, or with an articulate grasp of grounds); then I shall not only think, but feel, accordingly. This transcends, in any particular case, assigning a truth-value to a proposition – even an evaluative and self-referential one.

Moreover, while such percolation of a proposition through the mind and heart can enrich belief, it can also stand in for it. Nussbaum perceptively describes how one
feature, surely typical, of her initial grief was an anger, at the doctors and nurses, and a sense of guilt, on her own part, that she knew (her term) to be misdirected (21). She felt that her mother had been unkindly treated, by them and by herself, though she was aware that this was not so. On occasion, emotions are sustained by evaluations that are inescapable without being endorsed.\(^{19}\) As always, Nussbaum has a rejoinder: ‘We may often hold contradictory beliefs’ (35). To the long bereaved mother who, pathetically, keeps her departed child’s room always ready, it is tempting to ascribe an obstinate belief, ‘in her heart of hearts’ (as we say), that the child will return. However, there is an alternative, which is that, in Wollheim’s sense, she fails to accept that her child is dead, though she not only believes but knows this to be so. She may then fail to act upon her knowledge and belief, and instead, motivated by her emotions, act upon what she wishes were true. Here, there is still something to be learnt from Plato and Aristotle. It matters little whether we say that the mother acts as if she believed that her wishes will be fulfilled, or with a belief, at some mental level, that they will be.\(^{20}\) It remains true that emotions need to be educated and disciplined if they are to fall in line with – or supply – our most reliable apprehensions. Emotions are prone to an irrationality that is not merely another proof of the possibility of inconsistency in belief. Whether through false beliefs, or despite true ones, they can easily lead us astray, either while we are immature, or when our maturity is too severely tested.\(^{21}\)

Nussbaum is aware that reducing emotions, in their essence, to judgments may appear unfair to feelings, but suggests that Wittgensteinians ‘will find that if they start to try to pin the relevant “family” down they will be inexorably drawn (despite their dislike of necessary conditions) to talk of “feelings” that are really my “thoughts” under another
description, the “feelings” with rich intentional content that I described a while back’ (77). Yet one may wonder whether she does justice to this last concept – which can indeed seem paradoxical. I would prefer to give a fuller sense to this fine remark of hers, ‘Living bodies are capable of intelligence and intentionality’ (25). Proust somewhere remarks that falling in love is an extension of one’s body in space and time: one comes to feel facts (or fictions) about the life of the loved one as if they were located in one’s own body. Imagination becomes sensation, usually painful (in his view). Or take a homelier instance: the candidate who suffers from pre-examination nerves feels, as we aptly say, ‘butterflies in the stomach’. She identifies these as feelings of anxiety because they mark the presence of anxious thoughts and imaginings (which, as I have said, may or may not carry conviction). She enters into her anxieties not merely with her mind, but in her body; surely this is part of the mode – a typically human, embodied mode – in which she perceives her situation.22 Take a more disconcerting experience: nothing better punctures one’s moral self-complacency than realizing belatedly that, on some occasion, one has behaved insensitively or improperly without sensing anything wrong at the time – a realization that is experienced physically in a sudden feeling of hesitancy, as if the ground was giving way beneath one’s feet. Even when they are trusted, such feelings are often too inchoate and inarticulate to constitute judgments; they may then rather prompt reflection or observation that may issue in judgment – judgment that will confirm, or correct, the feeling.

We must therefore distinguish between types of case. Sometimes, feeling an emotion is a consequence of the cognition of a fact. At other times, one apprehends the fact in a psycho-physical way that already involves feeling an emotion. Where there is a
time-gap, belief may pre-exist the feeling, or follow upon it; it may stand to it as cause, or consequence. In other cases, the distinction between thought and feeling is conceptual, not temporal. Yet, in all cases, the identification of feeling with thought remains problematic.

It is a truism that emotions characteristically colour the ways in which we perceive and imagine aspects of the world that humanly matter to us. This can be distorting; ideally, if natural virtues have been developed into full virtues (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI 13, 1144b1-17), it can be uniquely perceptive. Of course, it is true that our perceiving and imaginings depend greatly upon our beliefs; yet an analysis that identifies emotions with evaluative beliefs is so far silent about the ways in which an ethical character that comes of a schooling of the emotions makes us perceptually receptive of the right saliences in a manner that may vary between articulacy and inarticulacy. Take a simple example of the desirability even of an untutored emotion: “I will have no man in my boat,” said Starbuck, “who is not afraid of a whale.” By this, he seemed to mean, not only that the most reliable and useful courage was that which arises from the fair estimation of the encountered peril, but that an utterly fearless man is a far more dangerous comrade than a coward. A recognition that the emotions can play this role is central to an appreciation of their cognitive potentialities; for perceiving is the way in which we apprehend current circumstances, while imagining is a way in which we comprehend absent ones. By contrast, an act of forming a belief exercises conceptual capacities, but is not itself a mode of cognizing anything. If we simply say, plausibly or implausibly, that to be afraid is fully to believe that one faces a real danger, we are not yet doing justice to the ability of a more or less educated capacity for fear to alert one to
dangers that one might otherwise overlook, and thereby to prompt one to responses that might otherwise fail to follow, or follow too late.

Nussbaum embraces this inference: ‘It is, of course, a consequence of the view I have been developing that emotions, like other beliefs, can be true or false’ (46). This is indeed an implicatum, but hardly a datum, or even a plausible supposition. We speak both of a belief’s being true or false to fact, and of someone’s ‘truly’ (i.e. sincerely) believing something; yet, while we speak of truly (i.e. genuinely) loving or hating, we can’t call the love or hate true or false to fact. (Paris’s love for Helen did not become false when, according to Stesichorus’s palinode, only a simulacrum of her followed him to Troy.) Where an emotion can be assessed as fitting or unfitting in relation to its object, we have a rich range of alternatives: ‘well-directed’ or ‘ill-directed’, ‘apposite’ or ‘inapposite’, ‘proportionate’ or ‘disproportionate’, and the like. (These pairs also apply to actions interpreted as responses to situations.) We don’t want a theory that makes a puzzle of the absence from the list of ‘true’ or ‘false’.  

Wittgenstein observes that emotion is expressible in a way that belief is not: ‘Compare the expression of fear and hope with that of “belief” that such-and-such will happen. – That is why hope and fear are counted among the emotions; belief (or believing), however, is not’ (Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, i. 596; cf. ii. 154). Further, we can speak of ‘uninterrupted anger’, as of ‘uninterrupted belief’ (ii. 154); but the two phrases do not exclude the same interruption. (If my anger is intermittent, this need not be because I keep changing my mind.)

Another observation is this: ““Expect” [erwarten] can mean: to believe that this or that will happen – but also: to occupy one’s time with thoughts and activities of
expectation, i.e. *wait for* (ibid.). Which is relevant as follows: ‘Belief is not any kind of occupation with the object of belief. Fear, however, longing, and hope, occupy themselves with their objects’ (ii. 155). So does grief: ‘Grief incessantly rehearses the sad thoughts’ (i. 835). This is sensitively spelled out for fearful apprehension by Anselm Müller.²⁶

Now, what should I answer, if someone were to ask me, for example, what it really is to be afraid before an exam? I shall perhaps say: ‘In the morning I wake earlier than usual; I at once sit down at my desk and study; I wish that it was all long past; I can’t but think all the time of my first attempt, which was a failure, and then I have this unpleasant tickling in the region of my stomach; I also wonder whether I could postpone the date; I can’t concentrate on other things …’

*Even if* this all presupposed an underlying judgement of this form ‘I am facing an important exam that I have a real chance of failing’, it would still tell again any *reduction* of the emotion to that judgment.²⁷ Nussbaum betrays an awareness of this in sliding (or gliding) from judging as *judging that* to judging as *exercising judgment*: ‘We are conceiving of judging as dynamic, not static. Reason here moves, embraces, refuses; it can move rapidly or slowly, it can move directly or with hesitation’ (45). This fits *coming to* judge that *p*, and perhaps *returning to* the thought that *p* (and associated thoughts), but not judging, in the sense of believing, that *p*. The capacity of judgment may be exercised dynamically or obsessively in forming or rehearsing beliefs; the state of believing that *p* can itself be neither dynamic nor obsessive.
If the thought, more loosely, is that emotion is an exercise of reason, one may wonder why it should be defined solely by reference to propositions (that is, intentional contents capable of truth and falsity). One might rather think of anxiety, for instance, as asking questions. Aristotle actually defines anger as a kind of desire (certainly one that presupposes a background of belief, factual and evaluative): ‘Anger may be defined as desire accompanied by pain for an evident retaliation on account of an evident slight to oneself or a friend by someone from whom the slight was inappropriate’ (Rhetoric II 2, 1378a30-32). Many of the other affections or pathê he defines as kinds of pain (lypê): this is true of fear, shame, pity, indignation, envy, and emulation. There is no emotion that he defines purely as a belief with a distinctive content. It is plausible to suppose that partly constitutive of grief is an intense wish, expressible in Greek by the optative, that something should not have occurred. If one must be monistic (but to what purpose?), why not identify emotions with wishes – or else states of feeling glad about something – directed at past, present, or future?

However, I would rather end by trying to dissolve a debate. Apparent disagreement is rife within philosophy; genuine divergence is harder to achieve. I do not believe that the neo-Stoic analysis of emotion offers any real alternative to a Wittgensteinian appeal to ‘family resemblances’. An unhappiness that I have already expressed may be answered by a remark that I haven’t yet quoted. I doubted the felicity of avowing a sense of bereavement by formulations of this kind: ‘My mother, an enormously valuable person and an important part of my life, is dead’ (76). Yet Nussbaum may not disagree, for she comments upon the judgment ‘An enormously valuable part of my life is gone’ as follows: ‘Even if I would not ever put the matter that way to myself, it seems to me that I
do have that general judgment. (We should bear in mind that not all of the relevant judgments need be conscious.’ (77). What then actually constitutes implicitly making – and, I would want to add, accepting – that judgment? (It can’t be that the latent judgment is just somewhere there in the mind, atomistically, like the beetle in a box.) It looks as if the answer may be simply: consciously grieving. But then why shouldn’t whatever implies the judgment amount to grief already?

Of course, Nussbaum may say that to identify the case as one of grief is to infer that the subject is implicitly making the judgment, but the inference now seems idle. We can bypass it as the ground for ascribing grief by an obvious short cut: the criteria for ascribing the implicit judgment, and thereby grief, can become criteria for ascribing grief directly. The neo-Stoic analysis may turn out to be a pointless if permissible epicycle upon a Wittgensteinian one. If we do admit the implicit judgment, we may prefer to conceive of the epicycle as a corollary rather than a condition, saying not that implicitly making the egocentric evaluation constitutes having the emotion, but that consciously having the emotion constitutes implicitly making (and accepting) the egocentric evaluation. Very simply, knowing that one is grieving at a loss is one way of knowing that it matters to one. We might still identify the conscious emotion and the implicit judgment that it imports, in a way as Nussbaum proposes – but, she may well feel, with some economy of effect.28

This reversal of explanation seems imperative if the identification is to apply to a kind of emotion not to be excluded a priori. There are emotions that make it the case that an object is important to the subject when, without them, it would matter to her not at all or much less. These may be romantic (such as courtly love, which may flourish outside
any relationship *demanding* devotion), or altruistic (such as Nussbaum’s ‘anger at the situation of women in developing countries’ (74), undoubtedly important, but not, independently of her anger, to *her*). The knight isn’t passionate about his lady *because* she matters to him. The case is not that his valuing her as important to him constitutes his passion for her, but that his awareness of his passion for her constitutes his valuing her as important to him. Certain emotions may be responsive to self-related values that justify them: Nussbaum believes that her ‘judgment of [her] mother’s importance’ (that is, to her) ‘implies a judgment that for anyone similarly situated, with a similar history, the parent should similarly be loved by that person’ (68, n. 68). Other emotions may make people or things matter to the subject for the first time. (These may or may not be important to others or in themselves.) Some emotions move in the space of social expectation, others wholly or partly in a field of freedom, idiosyncrasy, and supererogation.

Thus the relation of emotions to values is intimate, but variable. Nussbaum’s identification of emotions with evaluations of a kind has the heroic air of a forlorn hope. *C’est magnifique, mais ce n’est pas la guerre*. If it can reason why, and retreat from what is inessential to the project of re-evaluation, it need not do and die.

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2 The old Stoic accounts of the emotions (pathê) were multi-faceted, psycho-physical, and systematic. I attempt to do justice to the first two features in my essay ‘Were Zeno and Chrysippus at Odds in Analyzing Emotion?’, in R. Salles (ed.), Metaphysics, Soul, and Ethics in Ancient Thought: Themes from the Work of Richard Sorabji (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 471-88; with which one may compare Nussbaum, The Therapy of Desire, ch. 10.

3 Such was the view that Nussbaum advanced in The Therapy of Desire in exposition of Aristotle (80-81): ‘Emotions have a very intimate relationship to beliefs, and can be modified by a modification of belief.’ They can be classified not only as rational or irrational, but also as true or false, ‘depending on the character of the beliefs that are their basis or ground’, perhaps because these are ‘constituent parts of the emotion itself’ (88). The beliefs are also sufficient causal conditions of the complex, ‘at least much or most of the time’ (89).

4 I hope I am not being indiscreet if I recall a typically unforgettable evening with Martha when the conversation turned to the question whom one would rank first of twentieth-century philosophers. Martha was dismissive of the obvious suggestion, Wittgenstein, proposing John Rawls instead. Even major thinkers, let alone (dear reader) you and me, are creatures of contingency. A single reference to Wittgenstein’s Zettel (190, n. 42) may intensify a regret that she has drawn so little from that source.
5 Nussbaum alludes (28) to a limitation that Aristotle ascribes to fear: ‘We do not fear things that are a very long way off; for instance, we all know we shall die, but we are not troubled thereby, because death is not close at hand’ (Rhetoric II 5, 1382a25-7, Oxford translation). But note a difficulty that attaches to this on a doxastic conception of emotion: if we define fear in part by reference to a belief that danger is imminent, we make it a tautology that we do not ‘fear’ eventual death; but this is surely unsatisfactory (and not what Aristotle intends).

6 But consider the following. I believe that a stray meteor might at any time devastate human life as it is once supposed to have devastated the dinosaurs, though I have no idea of the probability. Am I anxious? Actually, not at all. And I doubt whether even thinking through the possibility in imaginative detail would make me anxious – though it might have that effect upon someone whose personality is such that he is more troubled by minute chances of a catastrophe than I can be.

7 One general trend in philosophy over Nussbaum’s and my professional lifetimes has been a growing scepticism about the aptness and practicability of defining such fundamental notions as knowledge, or perception, or intention in the manner that was central to the analytical approach of G. E. Moore and his successors. Moore famously excluded goodness as sui generis and simple; yet we should not presume, for example, that knowledge is either simple, or reducible to some variety of belief.

8 Wholly pertinent here is Richard Wollheim’s conception of the developmental potentialities released by what he calls ‘complex projection’; see The Thread of Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 214-18.

9 Compare amusement: being amused by a joke, and finding it amusing, are closely linked, and neither can be reduced to forming a belief that the joke is amusing.

10 For present purposes, I am using the term ‘criterion’ in a wide sense that goes beyond external criteria by which one recognizes another’s mental states. Accordingly, a criterion of the presence
of an emotion is some factor or element of which it is true a priori that it may either (where we can make the distinction) *evidence* or *go to constitute* this, though perhaps only generally and defeasibly. It may well be neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition. Of course, there is no implication that all such factors count equally: though all criteria are linked conceptually to that of which they are criterial, some of them may often be marginal.

Yet it is a complication that these conditions can produce a sense of loss that is coloured and intensified by resentment (if she was a poor mother), or guilt (if one has become a poor child). In either case, pain then attaches to a thought that it is too late to put things right, and this can stand in for the unconflicted regret that one would *wish* to feel. This is contorted, but not really problematic – except for a definition of Nussbaum’s type. (So would we need, for each emotion, a *family* of analyses that vary, widely or minutely, between types of case?)

In Hopkins’s poem ‘Spring and Fall’, about a child ‘grieving / Over Goldengrove unleaving’, ‘It is Margaret you mourn for’ is not, and could not be, what Margaret says.

Or are many emotions essentially deceptive in that they disguise – and *have* to disguise – the fundamental egocentricity of some concern? This would need argument (and I would cite Wollheim, *The Thread of Life*, 235-56 against it). Contingently, of course, they are no more insulated against self-deception than desires and intentions. Yet neither a hope that this century will improve on its predecessor (*post* Hitler, Stalin, and Mao), nor a fear that (because of over-population or global warming) it won’t, needs be egocentric in order to be sincere, and even intense.

In the current Pléiade (4 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1987-9), iii. 148-78. The annotators quote aptly from a letter to René Blum of 1913: ‘Nous croyons ne plus aimer les morts, mais c’est parce que nous ne nous les rappelons pas; revoyons-nous tout d’un coup un vieux gant et nous fondons en larmes’ (ibid.: 1432); that is, ‘We think we no longer love the dead, but this is because we don’t remember them; if we suddenly catch sight again of an old glove, we burst into tears.’
Similarly, she earlier conceded, ‘We may want to grant here that there are some nonintentional
feelings that are frequently associated with a given emotion: take boiling and anger, or trembling
and fear’ (60), but likewise continued, ‘Nonetheless, it appears that here too the plasticity and
variability of people (both of the same person over time and across people) prevents us from
plugging the feeling into the definition as an absolutely necessary element.’ Earlier, she had
allowed more latitude, though within a single style of definition: ‘There are noncentral cases that
share only some of the features of the central cases’ (24).

In *Love’s Knowledge*, she had written as follows (41): ‘If one really accepts or takes in a
certain belief, one will experience the emotion … For example, if a person believes that X is the
most important person in her life and that X has just died, she will feel grief. If she does not, this
is because in some sense she doesn’t fully comprehend or has not taken in or is repressing these
facts.’

We mustn’t, in pursuit of a thesis, exclude truisms like the following, which I quote from M. R.
Bennett and P. M. S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Oxford: Blackwell,
2003), 220: ‘Of course, knowledge of the facts that constitute a reason for feeling such-and-such
an emotion does not necessitate any such feeling. But if one does not respond appropriately to
the tragic or joyful circumstance, one is deficient in sensibility, and lacks the feeling proper to the
circumstance – which is a mark of not caring about things which, in general, we think we should
care about.’ It may on occasion be true, but is certainly not always true, that acquiring knowledge
can remedy such a deficiency. (Their chapter on the emotions is valuable not just for an exposure
of the conceptual confusions of neuroscientists, but for many true observations and nice
distinctions.)

*The Thread of Life*, 237.

One instance of this is pathological emotion. Brutish cowardice can cause fear of a mouse,
croire que l’échelle des craintes correspond à celle des dangers qui les inspirent. One peut avoir peur de ne pas dormir et nullement d’un duel sérieux, d’un rat et pas d’un lion’ (Proust, À la recherche, iv. 413); that is, ‘It is false to think that the scale of fears corresponds to that of the dangers that inspire them: one can be afraid of not sleeping and not at all of a serious duel, of a rat and not of a lion.’ In such cases, a man apparently finds frightening what he may well know to be no such thing.

20 More commonly and sanely, when an unwelcome reality is undeniable, actions make it unambiguous that what would be beliefs are only wishes. An instance that is equally explicit and pathetic is Brecht’s ‘Gedanken über die Dauer des Exils’ (‘Thoughts about the Length of Exile’). Wondering whether to expect an imminent return or an extended exile, the poet asks himself, ‘Willst du wissen, was du im Innersten glaubst?’ (‘Do you want to know what you most deeply believe?’). If so, he must attend not to what he says (1st section), but to what he does (2nd section). What makes this so poignant is precisely that his resolute words of hope retain their emotive resonance; there is no question of his giving them up.

Emotion without belief is also present in Mahler’s Kindertotenlieder (on which see Nussbaum, 279-94). I take its words and music of consolation to be heartfelt, though only half meant – they express hopeful fantasies to which inconsolable parents must cling as best they can, with feeling but without conviction. That, to my mind, is their pathos. (Mahler was later to achieve a profundity of feeling that precludes fantasizing. Das Lied von der Erde also ends with the sound of a celesta, but in expression – as at the close of Delius’s Requiem – of a relinquishment that is open-eyed and not escapist.)

21 I find an ambivalence in Nussbaum’s discussion of affective reactions to tragedy (238-48), which one may well take to exemplify emotion that is neither according, nor contrary, to belief. On the one hand, she writes of ‘sharing the emotion of a character by identification’ (242), e.g. ‘sharing Philoctetes’ anger and desolation, or the devastation of Oedipus when he discovers what
he has done’ (240). On the other, she proposes that an episode that has ‘mythic power’ does so because it is “‘a thing such as might happen’”, and in a way that affects oneself, directly or indirectly (246). She reconciles these views by ascribing them to ‘two levels’: at a concrete level, the intentional object of one’s emotion is the fictional character; at a more general level, its object is ‘the unjustified suffering that is really in the world’, and to which one is vulnerable oneself (245).

Though Aristotle is citable in her support (Rhetoric II 8, 1385b13-16), this seems to me to exaggerate one’s attachment both to reality – of which, it has been said, mankind cannot bear too much – and to one’s own reality. (Learning only to be moved by what is, or is taken to be, real would be an achievement, though not an attractive one; advancing age has occasionally been known to have a similar effect.) A reader or theatre-goer may well be moved specifically by the specific content of what is presented to him, though he has no opinion – or a sceptical one – of its plausibility (let alone of its relevance to his own life). No doubt it will then connect in some way with his own motivations and experiences; yet this may be because his sympathies are a loose function of these, and not because he is really being affected by an awareness of some general human peril or predicament to which he too is subject. (It is true that my reaction to Arnold’s ‘Sohrab and Rustum’ has been intensified by becoming a father myself; not, however, because of any new knowledge of the dangers of failing to recognize one’s own son.)

22 One reads that Benjamin Britten could not eat on the day of a concert in which he was taking part without throwing up. Was that not part and parcel of his nervous anticipation? Again, A. E. Housman famously confessed that, if a line of true poetry (the sort whose meaning doesn’t matter) came to his mind while he was shaving, his skin would bristle up and obstruct the razor. He felt poetry with his skin, at once a physical liability and a cognitive ability.

23 Melville, Moby-Dick (New York: The Library of America, 1983), 915. Aristotle remarks, ‘Fear makes us deliberate’ (Rhetoric II 5, 1383a6-7), ideally through tracking present dangers and

One might reflect upon the range of thoughts relevant to such assessments: in a case of questionable anger, ‘He didn’t do it at all’, or ‘It really wasn’t so bad’, or ‘You mustn’t let it eat you up inside’, or ‘Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.’ Note that the first two relate to the occasion of anger, the second two to its place within a life; in assessing an instance of emotion, we may reflect upon either or both (as again arises in the case of actions). The old Stoic formulations yield judgments that not only assess the objects and occasions of emotion, but approve current responses and reactions. This has the merit of confirming the relevance of thoughts of my second kind. How, according to Nussbaum, is one to criticize a grief that is well grounded, but becomes obsessive? Queen Victoria doubtless mourned too long and too much for Prince Albert; yet one couldn’t have said to her, ‘It is not true that your husband, an enormously valuable person and an important part of your life, is dead.’ Nor would it be an instant solution to read ‘your life’ as ‘your present life’; for the trouble was precisely that Albert continued to be all-important to her, and in her life, long after that ought to have changed. (So should we add that the object is taken to be ‘such as one is right to care intensely about’? But then what is caring intensely if it isn’t itself an emotion?)


26 I translate from a draft chapter of his titled ‘Emotionen’.

27 In fact, if one is neurotic about exams, one can be anxious when an exam is impending without thinking that one’s anxiety is well-founded; and, if one is happy-go-lucky, one can know that anxiety would be well-founded without feeling anxious. Indeed, one may well tell oneself, in the
first case, that it matters how well one passes, or, in the second, that it doesn’t matter whether one
passes. Yet anxiety, or its absence, may often rather explain such supposals than reduce to them.

28 However, in certain cases, where the emotion is consciously out of place, recognizing that its
object matters to one becomes not a relational evaluation, but a mere psychological observation.

29 So I find some distortion when Nussbaum writes as follows: ‘In order for compassion to be
present, the person must consider the suffering of another as a significant part of his or her own
scheme of goals and ends. She must take that person’s ill as affecting her own flourishing’ (319).
It seems to me that compassion can come first; if it then motivates action for an end, the success
of this action will indeed affect how well the agent’s life goes.