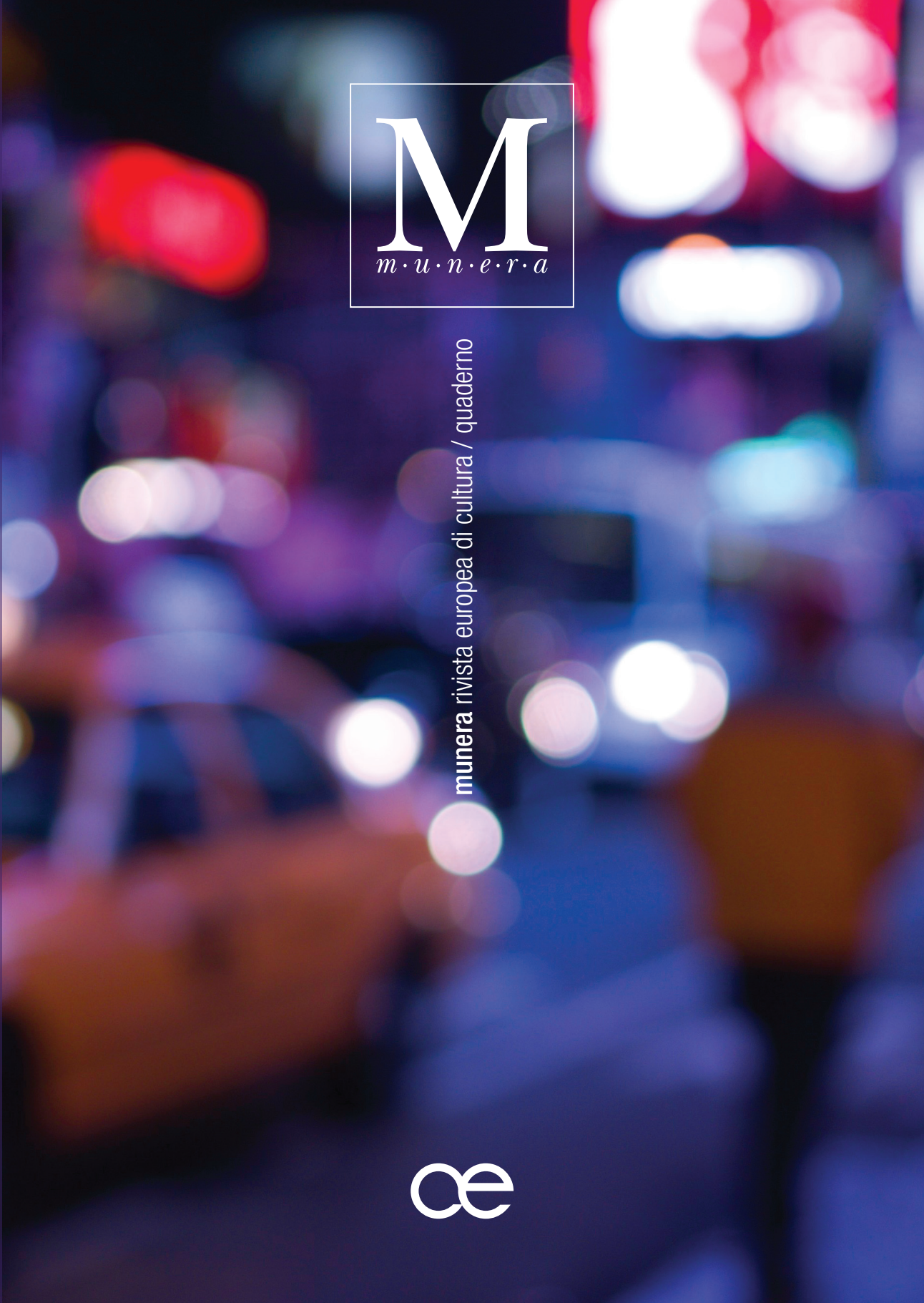
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«Questa è la sfida di Munera*: leggere i fenomeni e le creazioni del diritto, dell'economia, dell'arte, della letteratura, della filosofia, della religione nella loro unità, ovvero come creazioni profondamente umane: come scambi di "munera" e, dunque, come luoghi di umanizzazione. Come tentativi, messi in campo da un essere umano sempre alla ricerca di sé stesso, di appropriarsi in pienezza di una* umanità *che certamente gli appartiene, ma della quale è anche sempre debitore (e creditore) nei confronti dell'altro: nel tempo e nello spazio. Un compito che* Munera *intende assumersi con serietà e rigore, ma volendo anche essere una rivista fruibile da tutti: chiara, stimolante, essenziale, mai banale» (dall'editoriale del n. 1/2012).*

Indice

Kamila Drapało *

On Plants and Jewels

Martha Nussbaum's Vulnerability Approach

> To be a good human being is to have a kind of openness to the world, an ability to trust uncertain things beyond your own control that can lead you to be shattered in very extreme circumstances for which you were not to blame. That says something very important about the condition of the ethical life: that it is based on a trust in the uncertain and on a willingness to be exposed; it's based on being more like a plant than like a jewel, something rather fragile, but whose very particular beauty is inseparable from that fragility.
>
> *A World of Ideas. An Interview with Martha C. Nussbaum*[1]

Martha Craven Nussbaum's distinguished work is as vast as it is difficult to classify. Nonetheless, if one looks at it from the perspective of its basic problematic, two notions seem central: that of human *capabilities*, and that of human *vulnerability*. The two are interconnected: while in her most recent writings Nussbaum looks at how political arrangements address human vulnerabilities, she also stresses that prior to that we need to conduct a more philosophical-anthropological analysis on the human being, in order to understand «what vulnerabilities should be addressed».[2] Therefore, her work on capabilities stems directly from her work on vulnerabilities. However, does it not appear to be a contradiction, or at least a paradox? How does capability correspond to vulnerability? Nussbaum does not seem to address this question directly in her works. In an attempt to offer an answer, this article traces and situates Nussbaum's work on capabilities in the context of the notion of l'*homme capable* as developed by Paul Ricœur. It briefly examines Nussbaum's work on Greek literature and philosophy and, in the final part, analyses vulner-

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[1] (Bill Moyers, Interviewer) [Interview transcript], 1988. Retrieved from https://billmoyers.com/content/martha-nussbaum/.

[2] *Creating Capabilities* [interview with Martha C. Nussbaum], Harvard University Press: [*online*] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoD-cjduM40.

ability's connection to the notion of suffering and the cataleptic value of literature. In doing so, it attempts to show that the capability approach attempts at dismantling the anthropological conception prevailing in Western philosophical circles, which entails that a human being is an autonomous, rational individual, fully capable of exercising moral judgments.[3] Instead, by embracing vulnerability as an inherent aspect of being a human being, capability presupposes a self utterly immersed in and conditioned by social bonds with others. Such an approach allows Nussbaum to situate literature – due to its potential in exposing our vulnerabilities to us – as central for the formation of contemporary democracies.

Capabilities and l'homme capable

In her recent writings[4] Nussbaum distinguishes and develops ten central human capabilities – a framework for the examination of the political arrangements in various communities. She forms her list based on the conviction that, via self-interpretation and an appeal to certain common sense judgements, we can indicate some distinctive capabilities,[5] which define 'a human being.' According to her, those capabilities are:

> To live to the end of human life of normal length. 2. To have good health, to be adequately nourished and have adequate shelter. 3. Bodily integrity, which includes freedom of movement, personal security, and choice in matters of reproduction. 4. The capacity to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason. 5. To have attachments to things and people outside ourselves. 6. To form a concept of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. 7. To recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various

[3] See L. Palazzani, *Cura e giustizia. Tra teoria e prassi*, Studium, Roma 2017. In her volume, Palazzani, together with many other scholars in the field, stresses that Nussbaum's stance on the vulnerable human being is in flagrant contradiction to Kant's anthropology of the self-sufficient subject.

[4] See M.C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach, Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach, Sex and Social Justice,* Belknap Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London 2011.

[5] Nussbaum is inspired by Aristotle's essentialism in *Metaphysics* and draws on his views. However, she calls hers an *internal* essentialism, in order to avoid metaphysical (or transcendental) claims. This has been widely criticised. For example, Paola Bernardini has argued that Nussbaum's approach is functionalist, on the premise that Nussbaum «defines both the body («animality») and reason in functional, rather than metaphysical terms». (Cfr. P. Bernardini, *Human Dignity and Human Capabilities in Martha C. Nussbaum*, «Iustum Aequum Salutare», 4, VI (2010), pp. 45–51. Konrad Sawicki, on the other hand, accuses Nussbaum of materialism, individualism, and a cynical approach to human freedom (K. Sawicki, *Zdolności ludzkie i ich urzeczywistnianie w rodzinie: Koncepcja Marthy C. Nussbaum*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2016).

> forms of social interaction. 8. To live with concern for and in relation with other human beings as well as animals, plants and the world of nature. 9. To laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities. 10. To participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life. (…) to hold property (…) to work.[6]

Such an approach can serve two aims. Firstly, it is designed as a framework to evaluate and compare the level of life in various areas of the world. Secondly, Nussbaum intends it as a basis for the theoretical analysis concerning anthropological questions, such as «what people are actually capable of doing or becoming in the real world».[7] Her conception is inspired by, and strongly rooted in, the writings of Aristotle, John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*, Amartya K. Sen's *Capabilities theory*, as well as her fieldwork in India, among others.[8] It is astonishing that Nussbaum does not engage extensively with the author whose writings intersect with hers not only with regards to capability, but also that of vulnerability or *in*-capacity – Paul Ricœur. Both authors have published important works on: narrative imagination and ethics, tragedy, conflict and Greek literature. Nussbaum herself recognises those intersections in the chapter *Ricœur on Tragedy: Teleology, Deontology, and Phronesis.*[9] Ricœur mentions Nussbaum in various passages of his *Oneself as Another*,[10] particularly with regards to the theme of tragedy in *The Fragility of Goodness.*[11] Although their conversation does not extend much further than that, and the two seemed rather reluctant to engage in a dialogue, the intersections of their thought continue to be studied by numerous critics.[12]

In the context of this article, it seems beneficial to briefly look into Ricœur's account of l'*homme capable*, and his explanation of the link between fragility and capability. Far from using Ricœur's writings as a theoretical framework to analyse Nussbaum, looking into Ricœur's thorough analysis of l'*homme capable* seems important when studying the theme of

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[6] M.C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2009, pp. 76-77.

[7] See the introduction of Ead., *Women and Human Development*, cit.

[8] K. Sawicki, *Zdolności ludzkie i ich urzeczywistnianie w rodzinie: Koncepcja Marthy C. Nussbaum*, cit. p. 41.

[9] M.C. Nussbaum, *Ricœur on Tragedy: Teleology, Deontology, and Phronesis*, in: *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, ed. by J. Wall, W. Schweiker, W.D. Hall, D. Hall, Psychology Press, London 2002, pp. 264 -276.

[10] P. Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Seuil, Paris 1990; Eng. trans. by K. Blamey, *Oneself as Another*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992.

[11] M.C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy.* Cambridge University Press, New York 1986.

[12] See, for example R. Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining: Modern to Post-modern*, Fordham University Press, New York 1998; D.R. Steaver, *A Word About… Reframing soul Competency in Terms of the "Capable Self" in Nussbaum, Sen, and Ricœur*, «The Review & Expositor», CXIV (2017), 2, pp. 146-154; B. Tholen, *Political Responsibility as a Virtue: Nussbaum, MacIntyre, and Ricœur on the Fragility of Politics*, «Alternatives», XLIII (2018), 1, pp. 22-34.

capability. Indeed, naming capability the «cornerstone of philosophical anthropology»,[13] Ricœur situates it more extensively in the philosophical - anthropological tradition and articulates those intuitions that seem present in Nussbaum's earlier writings, but somewhat missing in her later, more politically – oriented approach. As we shall see, the theme of tragedy may indeed be a crucial link between their two *capabilities* approaches.

In Ricœur's anthropology, a human being is a being, which identifies her/himself by her/his capacities, by what she/he can do.[14] Following Martin Heidegger,[15] Ricœur explicates the fragility of the human condition and describes the human action as the verification of projects and intentions through posting them in relation to the reality of the world we inhabit.[16] Drawing on, and enriching, Hannah Arendt's account of action as the only essentially human performance,[17] Ricœur discerns the capacity to say, to act, to narrate, the imputation, and the act of promising as the attributes of *l'homme capable*:

1. The capacity to say means «to produce meaningful discourse spontaneously»,[18] that is: to speak about something to someone following shared rules.

2. The capacity to act is the capacity to «produce events in society and nature. This intervention transforms the notion of events»,[19] which are not merely what happens, but are free and to a certain degree unpredictable.

3. The capacity to narrate confers legibility and intelligibility upon the events, and opens up a possibility of what Ricœur calls a 'narrative identity' – which assumes that two notions form the human identity: *idem* – that is remaining the same person throughout time, and *ipse* – which «remains unfinished and open to the possibility of being told differently or of letting itself be told by others».[20]

4. Imputability – a moral capacity, denoting the capability of denoting oneself as the agent of action. Through it «human agents are regarded as the true authors of their acts, regardless of the force of the organic or physi-

[13] P. Ricœur, *Ethics and Human Capability: A Response*, in *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, cit., p. 280.

[14] Id., *Becoming Capable. Being Recognized – Devenir capable, être reconnu*, «Esprit», VII (2005), p. 1.

[15] See M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Eng. tr. *Being and Time*, Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken 1978 [1927].

[16] A. Wierciński, *Paula Ricœura antropologiczna hermeneutyka osoby jako l'homme capable*, «Analiza i Egzystencja», XIX (2012), pp. 161-176.

[17] For more on the notion of action and performance see H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1998.

[18] P. Ricœur, *Devenir capable, être reconnu*, cit. p. 2.

[19] *Ibidem.*

[20] *Ibidem.*

cal causes».[21] This connotes notions such as responsibility; it determines the possibility of reparation, forgiveness, and promising. It is the capacity, which Hannah Arendt called the only remedy to the unpredictability of the future.[22]

Therefore, for Ricœur, a human being is a capable and responsible being in all aspects of her/his life. However, Ricœur stresses the central complexity of the condition of *l'homme capable*, that is: that she/he is a spatial and temporal being, which does not have a god's eye perspective on the course of events, and which inhabits the world with other *capable* human beings. Following Heidegger in stressing that we are a Being *thrown into the world* (see the concept of *Geworfenheit)*,[23] Ricœur underlines that the impossibility of seeing the structure of a human being's actions as a whole stems directly from the limited perspective of her/his experience. In order to see the structure whole, one has to consider actions from a spatial perspective, to be able to see various events and occurrences from beginning to end, as a single timeless whole. Ricœur calls this perspective *totum simul*, referring to the way a narrator organizes a story. For Ricœur, this perspective resembles the way a creator sees the universe. It is «a gaze from outside of the limits of human temporality».[24]

In order to better understand this concept, let us evoke Aristotle's analysis of *peripeteia* (περιπέτεια) in *Poetics*.[25] For Aristotle, *peripeteia* is the reversal of the plot,[26] which is not the outcome of a conscious pursuit by the character, but rather something unpredictable. One of the most impressive examples of *peripeteia*, for Aristotle, is Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex,* a drama about Oedipus who became king of Thebes, only to realize that the man whom he has killed and the woman whom he has married on his way to the throne were, respectively, his father and his mother. Oedipus, although he could not possibly have known that his actions would lead to a family tragedy, plucks out his own eyes out of his sense of guilt. Oedipus's story has long-served philosophers and poets alike as an example of the impossibility of predicting the outcomes of one's own actions. Due to this impossibility, as Arendt puts it, human beings are subjects of their own acts «in the two-fold sense of the word, namely, its actors and sufferers».[27] Analogously, in

[21] *Ibidem*, p. 3.

[22] See H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, cit.

[23] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §§ 29, 31, 38, 58, 68b.

[24] W.C. Dowling, *Ricœur on Time and Narrative: An Introduction to Temps et récit*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 2015, p. 33.

[25] As Dowling argues in *Time and Narrative*, Aristotle's *peripeteia* corresponds to Ricœur's account of Mimesis 2. For Ricœur this perspective is both spatial and temporal. For him, spectators traverse the events in the same temporal way as characters, «before there dawns any intimation that the same events might also be seen as a unity of action». *Ibidem*, pp. 31-33.

[26] *Ibidem*.

[27] H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, cit. p. 184.

Ricœur's philosophy, a human being is as capable as she/he is fragile and vulnerable. To every capability corresponds a specific vulnerability – for example, by speaking, I can hurt someone. The same applies to the capacity to act. We can cause, or be subject to, suffering. Since love is also a capacity, the vulnerability that corresponds to it is the possibility of being wounded by the other. To be a capable human being means to be a suffering, vulnerable human being. For Ricœur, as Reich describes it, this condition stems from our fragility, which, «is manifested in the finitude of our corporality, its temporality, and our engagement in the world where we must cope with the permanent possibility of doing evil or being exposed to unhappiness, destruction, and death».[28]

Nussbaum's Vulnerability: Stressing the Existential Aspect

Ricœur's hermeneutics of *l'homme capable* makes it possible to highlight the crucial connection between capability and fragility. However, as we shall see, Nussbaum's analysis of fragility concentrates on its more existential aspects.

Thirty years ago, in *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Literature and Philosophy*, for the first time drew connections between fragility and living a good (here: flourishing) human life. She begins her analysis by drawing on Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* (458 BCE; *Agamemnon*, 1777), a tragedy about a king that is compelled to make a tragic choice between saving his army at sea or saving his beloved daughter. Nussbaum considers whether a rational person could plan her/his life in such a way as to avoid this kind of conflict. The same question guides her analysis as she moves on to examine Sophocles' *Antigone* (441BCE; *Antigone*, 1729), where the central characters seek to prevent conflict and tension by reducing to the minimum their commitments and love relationships. In the next part, devoted to philosophical works, Nussbaum argues against Plato's ideal of self-sufficiency in the *Republic* and the ideal of restricting one's desires, as proposed by Socrates in the *Symposium*, on the premise of both alienating oneself from the matters of the world and denying our human condition. To seek safety from the contingencies of trust or love sacrifices a quality of life that marks it as human.

Analysing Euripides' *Hecuba*, in the last chapter, Nussbaum considers what it means to be morally good, and what risks it implies. Hecuba tells the story of a Queen of Troy, a now-fallen city, who has lost all she had in the war and has been made a slave. Even under those most extreme circumstances, Hecuba has remained morally firm. However, when her closest friend mur-

[28] W.T. Reich, *Taking Care of The Vulnerable: Where Religious and Secular Ethics Meet in a Pluralistic World,* University of Trent, Trent 2011.

ders her beloved son, Polydorus, and leaves the body on the shore without burying it, the roots of her moral life are undone.[29] When this most profound and trustworthy friendship ends up being dishonest, she loses all hope and is transformed into a dog. Nussbaum claims that the story teaches us something significant about living a good life: namely, that the condition of such a life *is* vulnerability. To be good is to be exposed to the risk of being morally destroyed. Nonetheless, Nussbaum's message is clear: if we want to live fulfilling lives, we must not shrink from attachments.

Discussing her book in her interview with Bill Moyers, Nussbaum claims that «when this vulnerability is too much to bear it is always possible to flee into your own comfort».[30] For her, vulnerability is something that we can choose as our existential approach, or we can renounce it and be rid of it. Her analysis is in line with Cicero's understanding of vulnerability as reflecting the literal meaning of the Latin verb *vulnerare* (to wound). Vulnerability, for him, «means being susceptible to being wounded; figuratively, it means to be susceptible to some significant harm or limitation often characterised by various degrees of weakness, dependency, and defencelessness».[31] Although in her later writings Nussbaum focuses on the analysis of the vulnerabilities that no one should have to endure (hunger, pain), in the *Fragility of Goodness* she concentrates on relational vulnerability, which she believes to be fruitful and dependent on our free choice. While fragility is ontologically connected with the human condition, relational vulnerability is an existential choice. Nonetheless, according to Nussbaum, the existential courage to be vulnerable is indispensable to those who want to live a genuinely human life. In the next section we shall look into the question of why it is vital for living a good life.

Fragility, Suffering, and the Cataleptic Value of Literature

The stories that Nussbaum recalls, clearly show the downside of being vulnerable. In our private lives, we experience the pain caused by becoming emotionally attached to another person. As Arendt brilliantly and extensively proved in *The Human Condition*, human beings are free and therefore unpredictable beings. There is always a significant risk related to entrusting our heart to another, for we can never gain full certainty that it will not be shattered, as Nussbaum acknowledges when describing the example of Hecuba. Indeed, in the Western philosophical tradition from the Stoics up to Schopenhauer, the idea of a solitary life devoted to introspection and

[29] *A World of Ideas* [An Interview with Martha C. Nussbaum], cit.

[30] *Ibidem.*

[31] W.T. Reich, *Taking Care of the Vulnerable*, cit., p.10.

free from the risks and pains of life, has attracted and fascinated the world's greatest minds. The idea appears very tempting, after all, who would not want to avoid life's uncertainties and risks?

And yet, the value of taking risks to live a *good life* has become an important topic in contemporary thought. Józef Tischner, a Polish philosopher, once wrote that «in order to live you have to risk your life».[32] For Tischner, only when one realizes that there is much more to life than merely "staying alive", and when one finds values that are greater than life itself and is therefore ready to risk one's life for the sake of those values, does one start living. On the other hand, the inability to risk one's heart in love, friendship, or other intersubjective human relations, makes one's life somewhat less worth living. Nussbaum's call not to shrink from attachments appears to be in line with Tischner's idea that a life without such relational risk-taking is no life at all. While Nussbaum has never come across Tischner's writings, she was familiar with, and influenced by, another great thinker who praised taking risks in life – Friedrich Nietzsche.

From his writings, we can extract two arguments for accepting suffering as an inherent aspect of life: first of all, it leads to greater joy, greater fulfilment,[33] and secondly, it gives us the possibility of developing a greater self-knowledge. Sceptical of the idea that suffering makes us better persons, he was nonetheless convinced that it makes us more capable of being profound. A professor of Classical Philology at the University of Basel, in his works he often evokes the Greek idea of *pathei mathos* (πάθει μάθος)[34] learning through suffering. The term derives from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and has greatly inspired Nussbaum, who has devoted many of her works to the investigation of the role that intense emotions play in the development of our self-knowledge Indeed, *The Fragility of Goodness*, as well as her later works on emotions, resonate with the Nietzschean affirmation of life. This theme

[32] J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, Znak, Kraków 2017 [my translation].

[33] Nietzsche believes that suffering and joy function in some kind of balanced way. In an alluring passage from *The Gay Science* he writes: «what if pleasure and displeasure were so tied together that whoever wanted to have as much as possible of one, must also have as much as possible of the other – that whoever wanted to "jubilate up to the heavens", would also have to be prepared for "depression unto death?"» (F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Eng. tr. by T.W. Kaufmann, *The Gay Science*, Random House, Toronto, 1974 [1882], p. 85).

Secondly, Nietzsche relentlessly stresses that real fulfilment comes from struggle and pain. Alan de Botton, commenting on Nietzsche's works, writes: «In the interval between initial failure and subsequent success, in the gap between who we want one day to be and who we are at present must come pain, anxiety, envy, and humiliation» (A. De Botton, *The Consolations of Philosophy*, Penguin Books, London 2001, p. 215).

[34] For an extensive analysis of *pathei mathos* see, for example, D.B. Lombard, *Pathei Mathos in Three Tragedies of Euripides*, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit, Johannesburg 1984.

is also central in her book *Love's Knowledge*,[35] where she elaborates on the problematic interplay between reason and heart and the ways each of them informs our self-understanding. In her later works, she expands those considerations in the treatises on the intelligence of the emotions.[36]

One of the most compelling passages of *Love's Knowledge* is Nussbaum's analysis of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. The main theme of his book is the interplay between heart and reason in providing us with the knowledge of ourselves. The protagonist of the story, Marcel, has convinced himself by means of the intellect that he does not love his fiancée, Albertine. It is only after her tragic death, and the unbearable sorrow it caused Marcel, that he realises he did in fact love her. Nussbaum, carefully analysing the story, evaluates Proust's stance that «knowledge of the heart must come from the heart – from and in its pains and longings, its emotional responses».[37] As Christopher Insole points out, Nussbaum is suspicious of Marcel's epistemology of the heart,[38] as well as the sudden turn from rejection to love, caused by the death. Nonetheless, as her analysis progresses, Nussbaum seems to become fond of the idea that reason and intellect, mixed with habit, are efficient tools in obscuring the truth about ourselves from ourselves:

> The shock of loss and the attendant welling up of pain show him that his theories were forms of self-deceptive rationalisation – not only *false* about his condition but also manifestations and accomplices of a reflex to deny and close off one's vulnerabilities that Proust finds to be very deep in all of human life.[39]

According to Nussbaum, Marcel has succeeded in manipulating his self-knowledge by means of rationalisation. It is only an extremely intense emotion, in this case 'pain', that has brought about the truth concerning his condition: «I had been mistaken that I could see clearly into my own heart. But my knowledge (…) has now been brought to me (…) by the abrupt re-

[35] M. C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992.

[36] Nussbaum develops her idea on the importance of the emotions in Ead., *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*, Beacon Press, Boston 1995. She further elaborates it in her later books, such as Ead., *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2004; Ead., *Upheavals of Thoughts: The Intelligence of Emotions* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008; Ead., *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2009, which evaluates the importance of emotions in politics. Her most recent publications focus on the role of the emotions of anger and fear in shaping the current political scene: Ead., *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice*, Harvard University Press, Harvard 2016, and Ead., *The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at Our Political Crisis*, Simon & Schuster, New York 2018.

[37] Ead., *Love's Knowledge*, cit. p. 8.

[38] Ch. Insole, *The Realist Hope: A Critique of Anti-Realist Approaches in Contemporary Philosophical Theology*, Rutledge, Abingdon 2016, p. 200.

[39] *Ibidem*, p. 264.

action of pain».[40] Nonetheless, according to Nussbaum, in order to develop an understanding of ourselves, we do not need to seek extreme emotions or extreme suffering. In life, it is sufficient that we read good literature.

Nussbaum demonstrates how literature is strikingly revealing for our lives, as it gives access to a vast range of emotions, which in real life would probably take years to experience. Moreover, it exposes human vulnerability as inherent in every human life. Writers find the words to describe the fragile experiences of our inner lives, guide us in discovering our own selves. In her study, Nussbaum invites us to consider this tragic vulnerability and the impossibility of controlling our lives rationally as potential sources for human empathy, goodness, and morality.

Nussbaum is by no means alone in such considerations. It is beneficial to mention that in the second half of the last century, philosophy has experienced the so-called 'narrative turn'. Philosophers such as Arendt, Ricœur, Taylor, McIntyre, Ranciére, stress the cognitive, ethical, and psychological value of reading.[41] But before that, ever since philosophy has questioned the Cartesian idea of self – transparency of the subject to itself, it has been noted that the philosophical-scientific language was not capable of describing the complex identity of the subject. Great literature, according to them, has the potential, due to its cataleptic[42] value, to speak to the hearts and minds of human beings, when it employs the right tools to do so.

What is perhaps most compelling in Nussbaum's writings is that she regards the formation of a compassionate public psychology as key to the development of a virtuous civic society. Such a society, according to her, is able to approach problems with a constructive future-directed attitude, rather than an attitude of resentment and revenge. Literature is crucial for contemporary democracies, since, according to Nussbaum, we need «citizens who admit that they are needy and vulnerable, and who discard the grandiose demands for omnipotence and completeness that have been at the heart of so much human misery, both public and private».[43] Literature and politics, in Nussbaum's writings, seem to be more conditioned by each other than ever before. Nonetheless, this fascinating topic needs a more thorough analysis, which I hope to develop in my further work.

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[40] M. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, Everyman, London 2001, p. 265.

[41] M. Reut, *Sokratejskie pytanie, wyobraźnia narracyjna i światowe obywatelstwo*, «Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja», LXVI (2014), p. 9.

[42] From the Greek *katalēptikē*, derived from *katalambanein*, meaning "to apprehend," "to firmly grasp."

[43] M. C. Nussbaum, *Hiding from the Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law*, cit. p. 17.

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