UPHEAVALS OF THOUGHT

Emotions shape the landscape of our mental and social lives. Like geological upheavals in a landscape, they mark our lives as uneven, uncertain, and prone to reversal. Are they simply, as some have claimed, animal energies or impulses with no connection to our thoughts? Or are they rather suffused with intelligence and discernment, and thus a source of deep awareness and understanding? If the latter, the emotions cannot be sidelined in accounts of ethical judgment, as they often have been in the history of philosophy. They must then form part of our system of ethical reasoning, and we must be prepared to grapple with the messy material of grief and love, anger and fear, and in so doing to learn what role these tumultuous experiences play in our thinking about the good and the just.

In her compelling new book, Martha C. Nussbaum presents a powerful argument for treating emotions not as alien forces but as highly discriminating responses to what is of value and importance. Beginning from an intensely personal experience of her own, the grief felt at the death of her mother, she explores and illuminates the structure of a wide range of emotions, in particular, compassion and love. She shows that there can be no adequate ethical theory without an adequate theory of the emotions, and that this involves understanding their cultural sources, their history in infancy and childhood, and their sometimes unpredictable and disorderly operations in our daily lives.

The range of reference in this book is remarkable. Nussbaum engages with recent research in psychology and anthropology, and examines what philosophers such as Plato, Augustine, and Spinoza have contributed to the subject. She also demonstrates through careful readings of Dante, Emily Brontë, Whitman, Proust, and Joyce, and musical works by Mahler, that a genuine grasp of the complex intelligence of emotions will lead us to reassess literary and musical works as sources of ethical education.

No professional in moral or political philosophy, psychology, anthropology, literary and religious studies, or music can afford to ignore this book. General, nonacademic readers interested in understanding the role of emotions will find here a lucid and stimulating account of a much-misunderstood subject.

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UPHEAVALS OF THOUGHT
The Intelligence of Emotions

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For Cass
It is almost impossible to understand the extent to which this upheaval agitated, and by that very fact had temporarily enriched, the mind of M. de Charlus. Love in this way produces real geological upheavals of thought. In the mind of M. de Charlus, which only several days before resembled a plane so flat that even from a good vantage point one could not have discerned an idea sticking up above the ground, a mountain range had abruptly thrust itself into view, hard as rock – but mountains sculpted as if an artist, instead of taking the marble away, had worked it on the spot, and where there twisted about one another, in giant and swollen groupings, Rage, Jealousy, Curiosity, Envy, Hate, Suffering, Pride, Astonishment, and Love.

Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

Thus, by being born we have made the step from an absolutely self-sufficient narcissism to the perception of a changing external world and the beginnings of the discovery of objects. And with this is associated the fact that we cannot endure the new state of things for long, that we periodically revert from it, in our sleep, to our former condition of absence of stimulation and avoidance of objects.

Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*
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