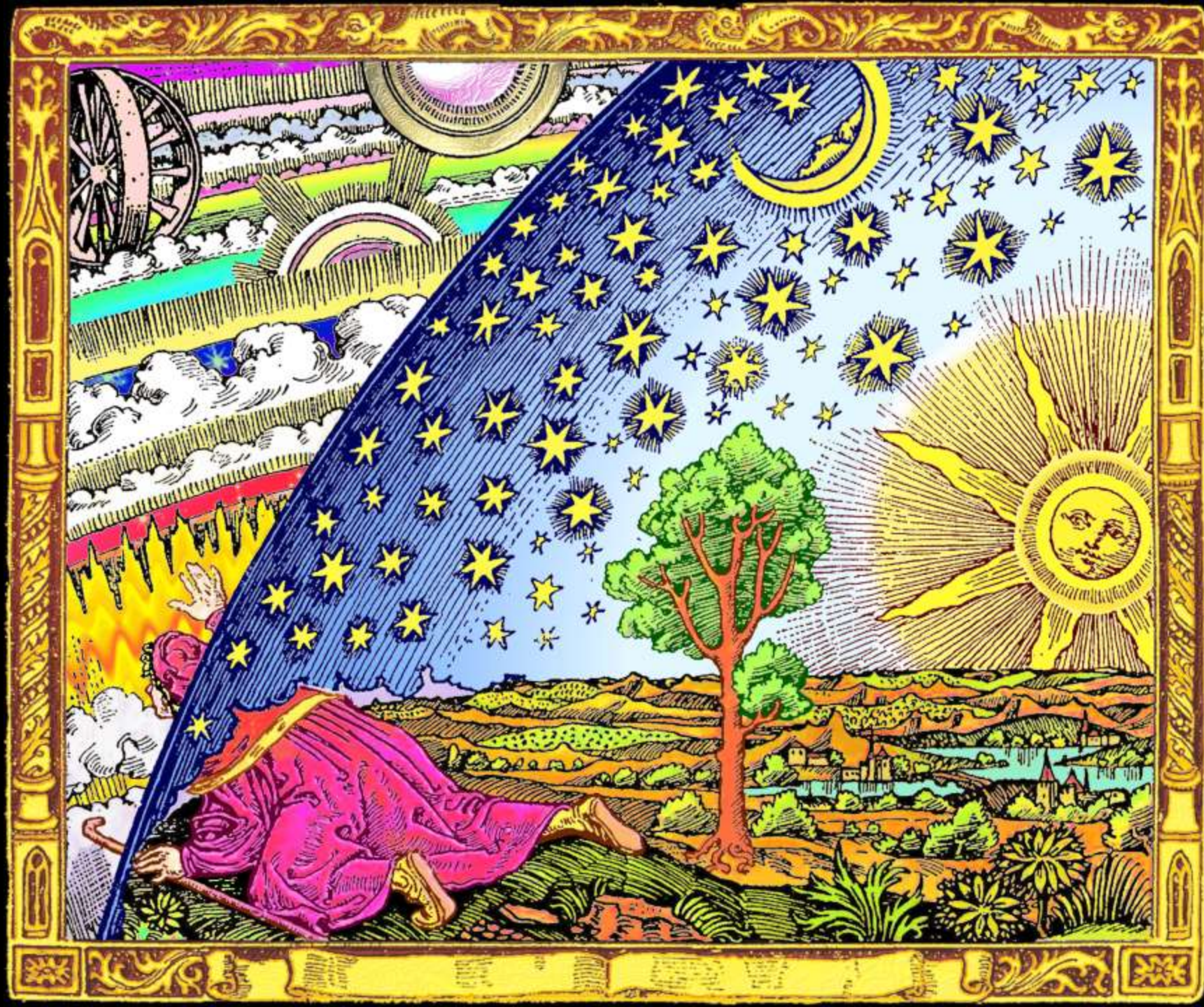




Martha Nussbaum: Feeling, Fragility, Flourishing

1. Introducing Nussbaum









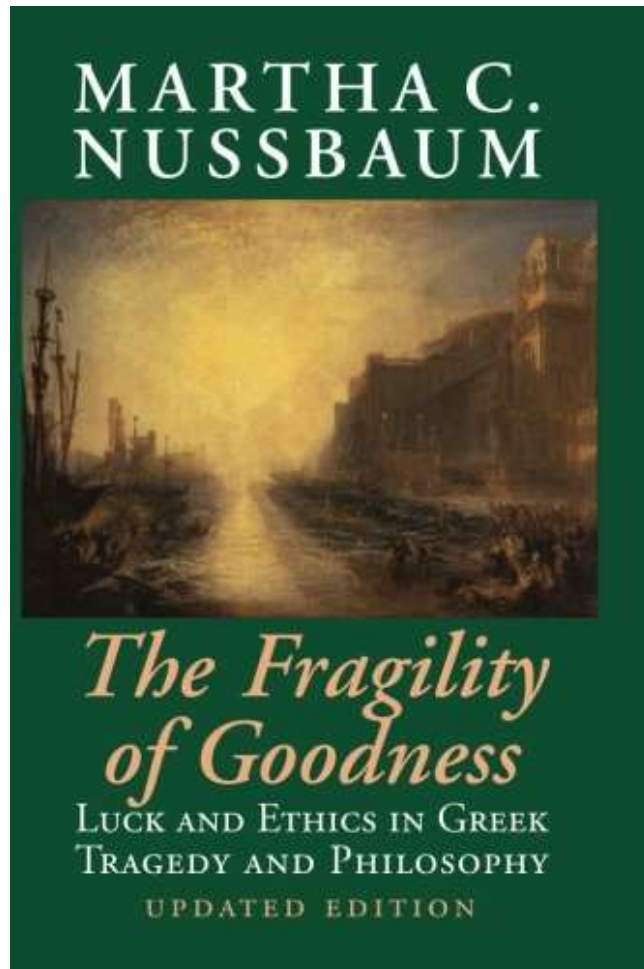
'Lovers and madman have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:

One sees more devils than vast hell could hold,
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth , from heaven to earth,
And as the imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns and shapes them and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.'

- Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595/96)



L: 'Art, as that which causes the spectator to lose his sense of isolation...' (Jane Addams); R: from *Hecuba*, by Euripedes



But human excellence grows like a
vine tree, fed by the green dew,
raised up, among wise men and
just, to the liquid sky.

We have all kinds of needs for those
we love: most of all in hardships,
but joy, too, strains to track down
eyes that it can trust.

- Pindar, *Nemean*



<https://youtu.be/tWfK1E4L--c?t=166>

Martha Nussbaum interview with Bill Moyers (1988)

Talk to your neighbour and discuss:

What impression do we get here about how Martha Nussbaum views philosophy?

And... What would you like to get out of the course?



Martha Nussbaum - The Fragility of Goodness

121,798 views • 29 Sep 2011

LIKE DISLIKE SHARE SAVE ...



Introducing Martha Nussbaum (1947 –)

- Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago
- Upper class, New York background: 'East Coast WASP elite ... very sterile, very preoccupied with money and status'
- Very close to her ambitious father, up until her marriage...
- Quits university to become an actor, starring in Greek tragedies
- Returns to philosophy and classics. Encounters sexism at Harvard and is denied tenure...
- Converts to Judaism, becomes very prolific from the 1990s
- Winner of Kyoto and Berggruen Prizes and many honorary degrees



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THE PHILOSOPHER OF FEELINGS

Martha Nussbaum's far-reaching ideas illuminate the often ignored elements of human life—aging, inequality, and emotion.



By Rachel Aviv July 18, 2016



Martha Nussbaum was preparing to give a lecture at Trinity College, Dublin, in April, 1992, when she learned that her mother was dying in a hospital in Philadelphia. She couldn't get a flight until the next day. That evening, Nussbaum, one of the foremost philosophers in America, gave



THE
NEW YORKER

More than just
the headlines.

“What is the basis of Nussbaum’s global fame? It’s her rich and eloquently argued body of philosophical work. But Aviv spends little time describing Nussbaum’s writings on social justice and religious intolerance, or her efforts to see her theories realized in practice ...

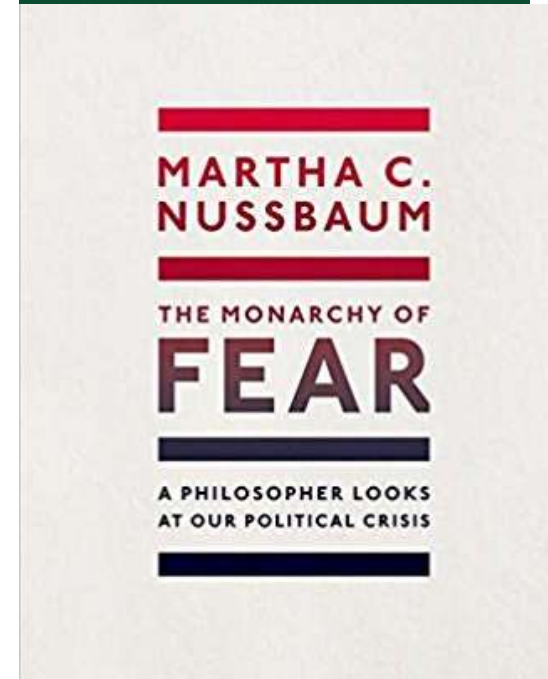
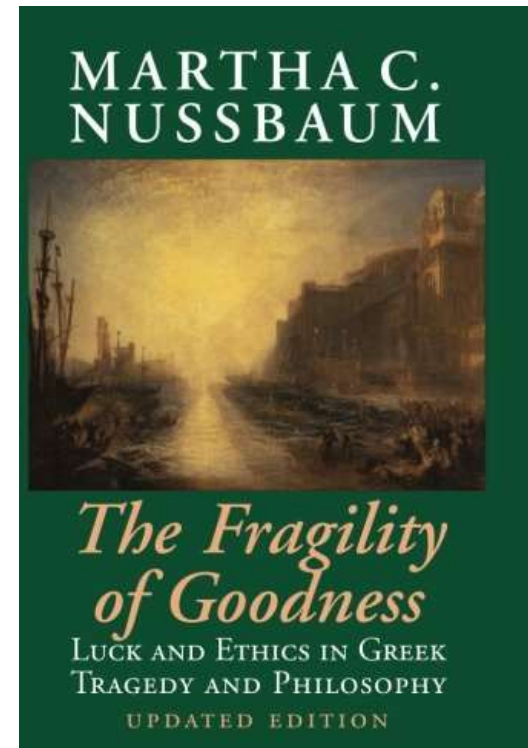
... Aviv seemed more concerned with Nussbaum’s personality quirks and the color of her nails than with the work that has made her an extraordinarily influential philosopher and public intellectual.”

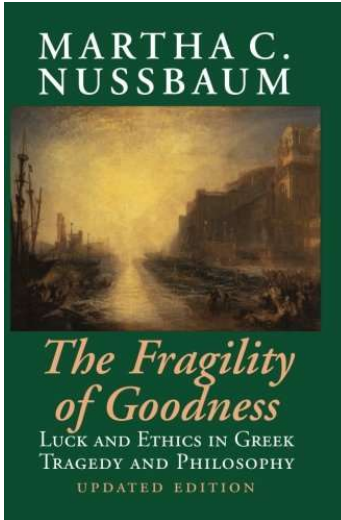
“I read Rachel Aviv’s Profile of Martha Nussbaum with a mixture of awe and dismay ... although Nussbaum espouses the value of vulnerability, she seems to strive to exist in an entirely different realm. It’s as if she were speaking to *those* humans, over *there*, the herd, while her tanned, toned, leggy self—running as she recites opera, living methodically, and eating like a bird while cooking Indian feasts—is exempt.”

Key works

- *The Fragility of Goodness* – 1986
- *The Therapy of Desire* – 1994
- *Sex and Social Justice* – 2000
- *Hiding from Humanity* – 2004
- *Not for Profit* – 2010
- *Creating Capabilities* – 2011
- *Anger and Forgiveness* – 2016
- *The Monarchy of Fear* – 2018

Authored around 27 books and 509+ papers?

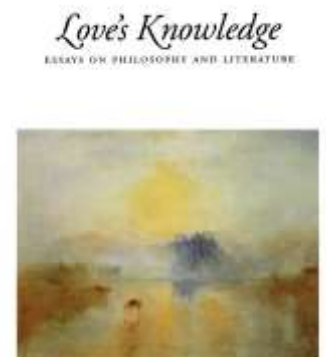
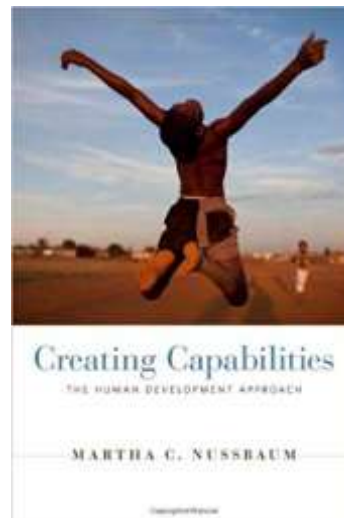




SEX AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE



Martha C. Nussbaum



Martha C. Nussbaum

What you'll need

- Moodle login
- All readings available as photocopies, with further texts online
- No author has yet written a study guide on Nussbaum!
- *The Fragility of Goodness* we will work most on (2 classes)

2. Fragility
3. Tragedy and Reason: *Antigone*
4. Love's Knowledge
5. Desire: Lucretius on Love
6. Compassion
7. Feminism and Rights
8. Capabilities and Human Development
9. Shame and Disgust
10. Anger, Blame, Justice
11. Education and Democracy
12. Citizens of the World

Fragility of Goodness
Fragility of Goodness; Antigone
Love's Knowledge
Therapy of Desire; Lucretius
Upheavals of Thought
Sex and Social Justice
Creating Capabilities
Hiding from Humanity
Anger and Forgiveness
Not for Profit
The Cosmopolitan Tradition



Moodle login

Username: firstnamelastname

Password: FirstNameInitial (capitals)

E.g. Martha Nussbaum

Username: marthanusbaum

Password: MARTHAN

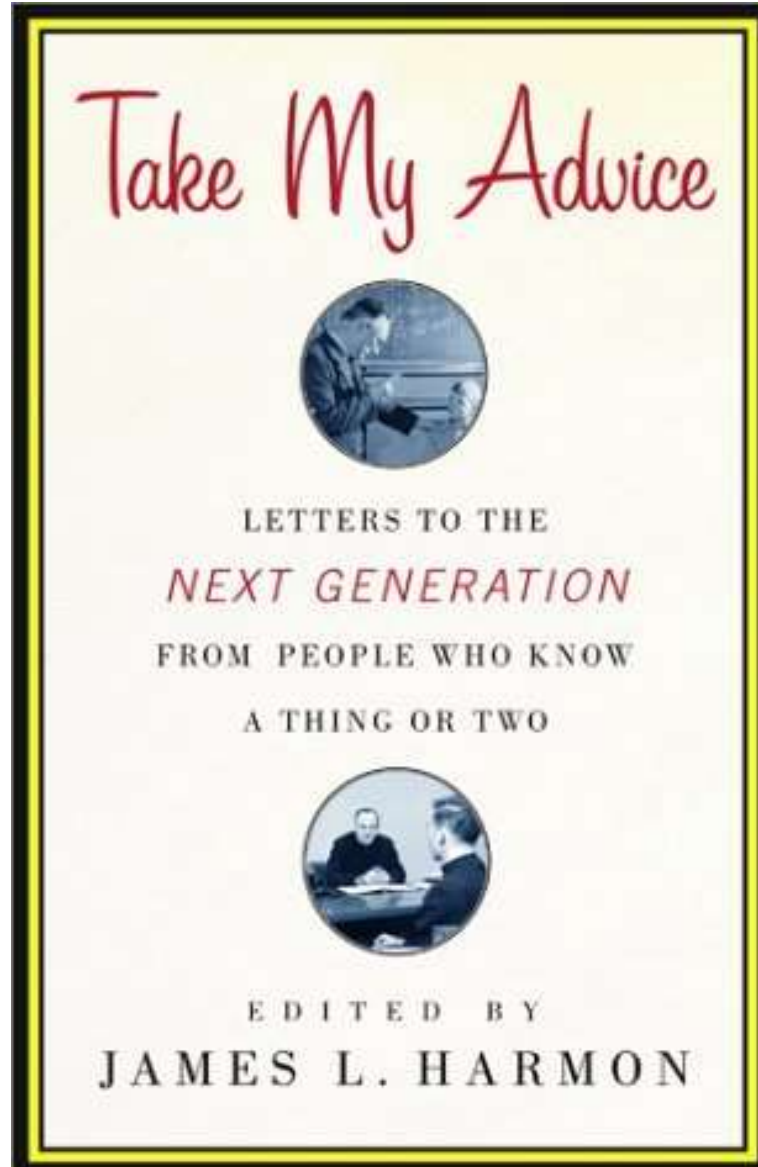
Break

*What would you like to get out of this course?
Have a think, and talk to your neighbour about it*

During the break, please also take a moment to fill out the course paperwork

If there's any questions come and talk to me during the break or note my email down for later:

Dan.Taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk



Take a look at the handout,
under section 2.

*What do we learn about her
approach to philosophy?*

‘Do not despise your inner world. That is the first and most general piece of advice I would offer

... Our society is very outward-looking, very taken up with the latest new object, the latest piece of gossip, the latest opportunity for self-assertion and status.

But we all begin our lives as helpless babies, dependent on others for comfort, food, and survival itself. And even though we develop a degree of mastery and independence, we always remain alarmingly weak and incomplete, dependent on others and on an uncertain world for whatever we are able to achieve.’

‘What is the remedy of these ills? A kind of self-love that does not shrink from the needy and incomplete parts of the self, but accepts those with interest and curiosity, and tries to develop a language with which to talk about needs and feelings.

Storytelling plays a big role in the process of development. As we tell stories about the lives of others, we learn how to imagine what another creature might feel in response to various events.’





Three features

1. Philosophy should be therapeutic

‘Lucretius is a poet; Cicero typically writes in dialogue form; Seneca writes both dialogues and epistles. Precisely because the philosophical agenda of all three of these great thinkers is therapeutic, they have chosen forms of writing that are hard to teach in the usual analytic manner.

... The point of saying that philosophy should be therapeutic is not to say that philosophy ought to subordinate its own characteristic commitments to some other norms (e.g., flourishing, calm); it is, rather, to say that you can get the good things you are searching for (flourishing, calm) only through a lifelong commitment to the pursuit of argument. Other figures in the culture-soothsayers, magicians, astrologers, politicians-all claim to provide what people want, without asking them to think critically and argue.’

– *Therapy of Desire*

Three features

2. Emotions can enhance our power of thinking

‘Like gusts of wind or the currents of the sea, they move, and move the person, but obtusely, without vision of an object or beliefs about it’

We should understand them instead as ‘intelligent responses’ to important concerns

‘Instead of viewing morality as a system of principles to be grasped by the detached intellect, and emotions as motivations that either support or subvert our choice to act according to principle, we will have to consider emotions as part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning’

– *Upheavals of Thought*

3. Thinking begins by recognising our dependence on others

‘[Aristotle]’s insistence that human beings are both vulnerable and active, his insistence on their need for a rich and irreducible plurality of functions, his emphasis on the role of love and friendship in the good life

... the absence, in Aristotle, of any sense of universal human dignity, a fortiori of the idea that the worth and dignity of human beings is equal ... For the Stoics, by contrast, the bare possession of the capacity for moral choice gives us all a boundless and an equal dignity.’

– *Fragility of Goodness*

‘we must reject one more key element of Stoicism: the contention that human beings are, in matters of the greatest importance, immune to the ravages of luck. Without a full appreciation of the needs people have for things outside themselves – food, shelter, bodily safety, the conditions of political participation – we just don't have sufficient reason to say that certain political arrangements are of urgent importance, and that others violate human dignity.

... human dignity is not impervious to what happens in the world, that it makes demands on the world, and is worthy of certain sorts of treatment. The task of government is to give people the social conditions of a life worthy of human dignity.’ – *Therapy of Desire*





A liveable life

‘Well, I think it means, first of all, that they are preoccupied with the idea of a life that has many different parts. That is a life that is rich and full, that involves many different activities. Now, it also turns out that these activities are not entirely under people’s control at all times.

That a lot of them, like the ability to love and care for a family, the ability to get an education, the ability to think well, even the ability to be a moral person and to choose well, all of these require support from the surrounding society

And so they have the image often of the person as like a plant, something that is fairly sturdy, that has a definite structure, but that is always in need of support from the surrounding society. And the political leader in that image is like the gardener, who has to tend the plant.’ – Bill Moyers interview

Next week... *The Fragility of Goodness*

- We'll begin work on Nussbaum's 1986 masterpiece
- We will read Chapter 1: Luck and Ethics
- For those coming with some familiarity, please re-read Ch1, but also the first part of Chapter 2 (included)
- Please check Moodle by Wednesday afternoon. I will include there podcasts, YouTube videos and web articles, plus full Nussbaum texts in case anyone wants to read further
 - e.g. the remainder of Chapter 2, or Chapter 8 (also recommended)
- Questions and thoughts to Dan.Taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk